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Henry Holland

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C R I T I C A L,
T O T H E
W O R K S
O F T H E
E N G L I S H P O E T S.
B Y S A M U E L J O H N S O N.

VOLUME THE SECOND.

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M.DCC.LXXIX.

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P R E F A C E S

T O

M I L T O N

A N D

B U T L E R.

M I L T O N.

THE Life of Milton has been already written in so many forms, with such minute enquiry, that I might perhaps more properly have contented myself with the addition of a few notes to Mr. Fenton's elegant Abridgement, but that a new narrative was thought necessary to the uniformity of this edition.

JOHN MILTON was by birth a gentleman, descended from the proprietors

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prieters

prietors of Milton near Thame in Oxfordshire, one of whom forfeited his estate in the times of York and Lancaster. Which side he took I know not; his descendant inherited no veneration for the White Rose.

His grandfather John was keeper of the forest of Shotover, a zealous papist, who disinherited his son, because he had forsaken the religion of his ancestors.

His father, John, who was the son disinherited, had recourse for his support to the profession of a scrivener. He was a man eminent for his skill in musick, many of his compositions being still to be found; and his reputation in his profession was such, that he grew rich, and retired to an estate. He had probably

ably more than common literature, as his son addresses him in one of his most elaborate Latin poems. He married a gentlewoman of the name of Caston, a Welsh family, by whom he had two sons, John the poet, and Christopher who studied the law, and adhered, as the law taught him, to the king's party, for which he was awhile persecuted, but having, by his brother's interest, obtained permission to live in quiet, he supported himself by chamber-practice, till, soon after the accession of king James, he was knighted and made a judge; but, his constitution being too weak for business, he retired before any disreputable compliances became necessary.

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He had likewise a daughter Anne, whom he married with a considerable fortune to Edward Philips, who came from Shrewsbury, and rose in the Crown-office to be secondary: by him she had two sons, John and Edward, who were educated by the poet, and from whom is derived the only authentick account of his domestick manners.

John, the poet, was born in his father's house, at the Spread-Eagle in Bread-street, Dec. 9, 1608, between six and seven in the morning. His father appears to have been very solicitous about his education; for he was instructed at first by private tuition under the care of Thomas Young, who was afterwards chaplain to the English mer-

chants

chants at Hamburgh; and of whom we have reason to think well, since his scholar considered him as worthy of an epistolary Elegy.

He was then sent to St. Paul's School, under the care of Mr. Gill; and removed, in the beginning of his sixteenth year, to Christ's College in Cambridge, where he entered a sizer, Feb. 12, 1624.

He was at this time eminently skilled in the Latin tongue; and he himself, by annexing the dates to his first compositions, a boast of which the learned *Politian* had given him an example, seems to commend the earliness of his own proficiency to the notice of posterity. But the products of his vernal

fertility have been surpassed by many, and particularly by his contemporary Cowley. Of the powers of the mind it is difficult to form an estimate: many have excelled Milton in their first essays, who never rose to works like *Paradise Lost*.

At fifteen, a date which he uses till he is sixteen, he translated or versified two Psalms, 114 and 136, which he thought worthy of the publick eye; but they raise no great expectations: they would in any numerous school have obtained praise, but not excited wonder.

Many of his Elegies appear to have been written in his eighteenth year, by which it appears that he had then read the Roman authors with very nice discernment.

ment. I once heard Mr. Hampton, the translator of Polybius, remark what I think is true, that Milton was the first Englishman who, after the revival of letters, wrote Latin verses with classick elegance. If any exceptions can be made, they are very few: Haddon and Ascham, the pride of Elizabeth's reign, however they may have succeeded in prose, no sooner attempt verses than they provoke derision. If we produced any thing worthy of notice before the elegies of Milton, it was perhaps *Alabaster's Roxana*:

Of the exercises which the rules of the University required, some were published by him in his maturer years. They had been undoubtedly applauded; for they

8. MILTON.

were such as few can perform : yet there is reason to suspect that he was regarded in his college with no great fondness. That he obtained no fellowship is certain ; but the unkindness with which he was treated was not merely negative. I am ashamed to relate what I fear is true, that Milton was the last student in either university that suffered the publick indignity of corporal correction.

It was, in the violence of controversial hostility, objected to him, that he was expelled : this he steadily denies, and it was apparently not true ; but it seems plain from his own verses to *Dic- deti*, that he had incurred *Rustication* ; a temporary dismissal into the country, with perhaps the loss of a term :

si l

Jam

Jam nec arundiferum mihi cura revifere Camum,
 Nec dudum vetiti me laris angit amor ;
 Nec duri libet ufque minas perferre magiftri,
 Cæteraque ingenio non fubeunda meo.

I cannot find any meaning but this, which even kindnefs and reverence can give to the term, *vetiti laris*, “ a habitation from which he is excluded ;” or how *exile* can be otherwife interpreted. He declares yet more, that he is weary of enduring *the threats of a rigorous mafter, and something else, which a temper like his cannot undergo*. What was more than threat was evidently punifhment. This poem, which mentions his *exile*, proves likewise that it was not perpetual ; for it concludes with a refolution of returning fome time to Cambridge.

He took both the usual degrees; that of Batchelor in 1628, and that of Master in 1632; but he left the university with no kindness for its institution, alienated either by the injudicious severity of his governors, or his own captious perverseness. The cause cannot now be known, but the effect appears in his writings. His scheme of education, inscribed to *Hartlib*, supercedes all academical instruction, being intended to comprise the whole time which men usually spend in literature, from their entrance upon grammar, *till they proceed, as it is called, masters of arts.* And in his *Discourse on the likeliest Way to remove Hirelings out of the Church*, he ingeniously proposes, that *the profits of the lands forfeited by*
the

the act for superstitious uses, should be applied to such academies all over the land, where languages and arts may be taught together; so that youth may be at once brought up to a competency of learning and an honest trade, by which means such of them as had the gift, being enabled to support themselves (without tithes) by the latter, may, by the help of the former, become worthy preachers.

One of his objections to academical education, as it was then conducted, is, that men designed for orders in the Church were permitted to act plays, *writing and unboning their clergy limbs to all the antick and dishonest gestures of Trincalos, buffoons and bawds, prostituting the shame of that ministry which they had,*

or were near having, to the eyes of courtiers and court-ladies, their grooms and mademoiselles.

This is sufficiently peevish in a man, who, when he mentions his exile from the college, relates, with great luxuriance, the compensation which the pleasures of the theatre afford him. Plays were therefore only criminal when they were acted by academicks.

He went to the university with a design of entering into the church, but in time altered his mind; for he declared, that whoever became a clergyman must
 “ subscribe slave, and take an oath
 “ withal, which, unless he took with a
 “ conscience that could retch, he must
 “ straight perjure himself. He thought
 “ it

“ it better to prefer a blameless silence
 “ before the office of speaking, bought
 “ and begun with servitude and for-
 “ swearing.”

These expressions are, I find, applied
 to the subscription of the Articles; but
 it seems more probable that they relate
 to canonical obedience. I know not
 any of the Articles which seem to thwart
 his opinions; but the thoughts of obe-
 dience, whether canonical or civil, raised
 his indignation.

His unwillingness to engage in the
 ministry, perhaps not yet advanced to a
 settled resolution of declining it, ap-
 pears in a letter to one of his friends,
 who had reproved his suspended and
 dilatory life, which he seems to have
 im-

imputed to an insatiable curiosity, and fantastick luxury of various knowledge. To this he writes a cool and plausible answer, in which he endeavours to persuade him that the delay proceeds not from the delights of desultory study, but from the desire of obtaining more fitness for his task; and that he goes on, *not taking thought of being late, so it give advantage to be more fit.*

When he left the university, he returned to his father, then residing at Horton in Buckinghamshire, with whom he lived five years; in which time he is said to have read all the Greek and Latin writers. With what limitations this universality is to be understood, who shall inform us?

It

M I L T O N. 13

It might be supposed that he who read so much should have done nothing else; but Milton found time to write the Masque of *Comus*, which was presented at Ludlow, then the residence of the Lord President of Wales, in 1634; and had the honour of being acted by the earl of Bridgewater's sons and daughter. The fiction is derived from Homer's *Circe*; but we never can refuse to any modern the liberty of borrowing from Homer:

—a quo ceu fonte perenni
Vatum Pieriis ora rigantur aquis.

His next production was *Lycidas*, an elegy, written in 1637, on the death of Mr. King, the son of Sir John King,

secretary for Ireland in the time of Elizabeth, James, and Charles. King was much a favourite at Cambridge, and many of the wits joined to do honour to his memory. Milton's acquaintance with the Italian writers may be discovered by a mixture of longer and shorter verses, according to the rules of Tuscan poetry, and his malignity to the Church by some lines which are interpreted as threatening its extermination.

He is supposed about this time to have written his *Arcades*; for while he lived at Horton he used sometimes to steal from his studies a few days, which he spent at Harefield, the house of the countess dowager of Derby, where

where the *Arcades* made part of a dramatick entertainment.

He began now to grow weary of the country; and had some purpose of taking chambers in the Inns of Court, when the death of his mother set him at liberty to travel, for which he obtained his father's consent, and Sir Henry Wotton's directions, with the celebrated precept of prudence, *i pensieri stretti, ed il viso sciolto*; "thoughts close, and looks loose."

In 1638 he left England, and went first to Paris; where, by the favour of lord *Scudamore*, he had the opportunity of visiting *Grotius*, then residing at the French court as ambassador from Christina of Sweden. From Paris he hastened

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into

into Italy, of which he had with particular diligence studied the language and literature; and, though he seems to have intended a very quick perambulation of the country, staid two months at Florence; where he found his way into the academies, and produced his compositions with such applause as appears to have exalted him in his own opinion, and confirmed him in the hope, that, “by labour and intense study, which,” says he, “I take to be my portion in this life, joined with a strong propensity of nature, he might leave something so written to after-times, as they should not willingly let it die.”

It appears, in all his writings, that he had the usual concomitant of great abili-

abilities, a lofty and steady confidence in himself, perhaps not without some contempt of others; for scarcely any man ever wrote so much and praised so few. Of his praise he was very frugal; as he set its value high, and considered his mention of a name as a security against the waste of time, and a certain preservative from oblivion.

At Florence he could not indeed complain that his merit wanted distinction. Carlo Dati presented him with an encomiastick inscription, in the tumid lapidary stile; and Francini wrote him an ode, of which the first stanza is only empty noise; the rest are perhaps too diffuse on common topicks; but the last is natural and beautiful.

From Florence he went to Sienna, and from Sienna to Rome, where he was again received with kindness by the Learned and the Great Holstenius, the keeper of the Vatican library, who had resided three years at Oxford, introduced him to cardinal Barberini, and he, at a musical entertainment, waited for him at the door, and led him by the hand into the assembly. Here Selvaggi praised him in a distich, and Salfilli in a tetrastick; neither of them of much value. The Italians were gainers by this literary commerce; for the encomiums with which Milton repaid Salfilli, though not secure against a stern grammarian, turn the balance indisputably in Milton's favour,

Of

Of these Italian testimonies, poor as they are, he was proud enough to publish them before his poems; though he says, he cannot be suspected but to have known that they were said *non tam de se, quam supra se.*

At Rome, as at Florence, he staid only two months; a time indeed sufficient, if he desired only to ramble with an explainer of its antiquities, or to view palaces and count pictures; but certainly too short for the contemplation of learning, policy, or manners.

From Rome he passed on to Naples, in company of a hermit; a companion from whom little could be expected, yet to him Milton owed his introduction to Manso marquis of Villa, who

had been before the patron of Tasso. Manso was enough delighted with his accomplishments to honour him with a sorry distich, in which he commends him for every thing but his religion; and Milton, in return, addressed him in a Latin poem, which must have raised an high opinion of English elegance and literature.

His purpose was now to have visited Sicily and Greece; but, hearing of the differences between the king and parliament, he thought it proper to hasten home, rather than pass his life in foreign amusements while his countrymen were contending for their rights. He therefore came back to Rome, tho' the merchants informed him of plots
laid

laid against him by the Jesuits, for the
 liberty of his conversations on religion.
 He had sense enough to judge that there
 was no danger, and therefore kept on
 his way, and acted as before, neither
 obtruding nor shunning controversy. He
 had perhaps given some offence by visit-
 ing Galileo, then a prisoner in the In-
 quisition for philosophical heresy ; and
 at Naples he was told by Manso, that,
 by his declarations on religious questions,
 he had excluded himself from some dis-
 tinctions which he should otherwise have
 paid him. But such conduct, though
 it did not please, was yet sufficiently
 safe ; and Milton staid two months more
 at Rome, and went on to Florence with-
 out molestation.

From Florence he visited Lucca. He afterwards went to Venice; and, having sent away a collection of musick and other books, travelled to Geneva, which he probably considered as the metropolis of orthodoxy. Here he reposed, as in a congenial element, and became acquainted with John Diodati and Frederick Spanheim, two learned professors of Divinity. From Geneva he passed through France; and came home, after an absence of a year and three months.

At his return he heard of the death of his friend Charles Diodati; a man whom it is reasonable to suppose of great merit, since he was thought by Milton worthy of a poem, intituled, *Epitaphium Dámonis*, written with the

com-

common but childish imitation of pastoral life.

He now hired a lodging at the house of one Ruffel, a taylor in St. Bride's Church-yard, and undertook the education of John and Edward Phillips, his sister's sons. Finding his rooms too little, he took a house and garden in Aldersgate-street, which was not then so much out of the world as it is now; and chose his dwelling at the upper end of a passage, that he might avoid the noise of the street. Here he received more boys, to be boarded and instructed.

Let not our veneration for Milton forbid us to look with some degree of merriment on great promises and small performance, on the man who hastens home,
because

because his countrymen are contending for their liberty, and, when he reaches the scene of action, vapours away his patriotism in a private boarding-school. This is the period of his life from which all his biographers seem inclined to shrink. They are unwilling that Milton should be degraded to a school-master; but since it cannot be denied that he taught boys, one finds out that he taught for nothing, and another that his motive was only zeal for the propagation of learning and virtue; and all tell what they do not know to be true, only to excuse an act which no wise man will consider as in itself disgraceful. His father was alive; his allowance was not ample, and he supplied its deficiencies

cies by an honest and useful employment.

It is told, that in the art of education he performed wonders; and a formidable list is given of the authors, Greek and Latin, that were read in Aldersgate-street, by youth between ten and fifteen or sixteen years of age. Those who tell or receive these stories, should consider that nobody can be taught faster than he can learn. The speed of the best horseman must be limited by the power of his horse. Every man, that has ever undertaken to instruct others, can tell what slow advances he has been able to make, and how much patience it requires to recall vagrant inattention, to stimulate sluggish indifference,

ference, and to rectify absurd misapprehension.

The purpose of Milton, as it seems, was to teach something more solid than the common literature of schools, by reading those authors that treat of physical subjects; such as the Georgick, and astronomical treatises of the ancients. This was a scheme of improvement which seems to have busied many literary projectors of that age. Cowley, who had more means than Milton of knowing what was wanting to the embellishments of life, formed the same plan of education in his imaginary College.

But the truth is, that the knowledge of external nature, and of the sciences
which

which that knowledge requires or includes, is not the great or the frequent business of the human mind. Whether we provide for action or conversation, whether we wish to be useful or pleasing, the first requisite is the religious and moral knowledge of right and wrong; the next is an acquaintance with the history of mankind, and with those examples which may be said to embody truth, and prove by events the reasonableness of opinions. Prudence and justice are virtues, and excellencies, of all times, and of all places; we are perpetually moralists, but we are geometricians only by chance. Our intercourse with intellectual nature is necessary; our speculations upon matter are voluntary, and at
leisure.

leisure. Physical knowledge is of such rare emergence, that one man may know another half his life without being able to estimate his skill in hydrostaticks or astronomy; but his moral and prudential character immediately appears.

Those authors, therefore, are to be read at schools that supply most axioms of prudence, most principles of moral truth, and most materials for conversation; and these purposes are best served by poets, orators, and historians.

Let me not be censured for this digression as pedantick or paradoxical; for if I have Milton against me, I have Socrates on my side. It was his labour to turn philosophy from the study of nature to speculations upon life, but the
inno-

innovators whom I oppose are turning off attention from life to nature. They seem to think, that we are placed here to watch the growth of plants, or the motions of the stars. Socrates was rather of opinion, that what we had to learn was, how to do good, and avoid evil.

Ὅτι τοι ἐν μεγάροισι κακὸν ἄγαθόν τε τέτυκται.

Of institutions we may judge by their effects. From this wonder-working academy, I do not know that there ever proceeded any man very eminent for knowledge: its only genuine product, I believe, is a small History of Poetry, written in Latin by his nephew, of which perhaps none of my readers has ever heard.

That

That in his school, as in every thing else which he undertook, he laboured with great diligence, there is no reason for doubting. One part of his method deserves general imitation. He was careful to instruct his scholars in religion. Every Sunday was spent upon theology; in which he dictated a short system, gathered from the writers that were then fashionable in the Dutch universities.

His set his pupils an example of hard study and spare diet; only now and then he allowed himself to pass a day of festivity and indulgence with some gay gentlemen of Gray's Inn.

He now began to engage in the controversies of the times, and lent his
breath

breath to blow the flames of contention.

In 1641 he published a treatise of *Reformation* in two books, against the established Church; being willing to help the Puritans, who were, he says, *inferior to the Prelates in learning*.

Hall bishop of Norwich had published an *Humble Remonstrance*, in defence of Episcopacy; to which, in 1641, six ministers, of whose names the first letters made the celebrated word *Smectymnus*, gave their Answer. Of this Answer a Confutation was attempted by the learned *Usher*; and to the Confutation Milton published a Reply, intitled, *Of Prelatical Episcopacy, and whether it may be deduced from the Apostolical Times, by virtue of those testimonies which*

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are

are alleged to that purpose, in some late treatises, one whereof goes under the name of James lord bishop of Armagh.

I have transcribed this title to shew, by his contemptuous mention of Usher, that he had now adopted the puritanical savageness of manners. His next work was, *The Reason of Church Government urged against Prelacy*, by Mr. John Milton, 1642. In this book he discovers, not with ostentatious exultation, but with calm confidence, his high opinion of his own powers; and promises to undertake something, he yet knows not what, that may be of use and honour to his country. "This," says he, "is not to be obtained but by devout prayer to that Eternal Spirit that can enrich

"enrich with all utterance and know-
 "ledge, and sends out his Seraphims
 "with the hallowed fire of his altar, to
 "touch and purify the lips of whom
 "he pleases. To this must be added,
 "industrious and select reading, steady
 "observation, and insight into all seem-
 "ly and generous arts and affairs; till
 "which in some measure be compassed, I
 "refuse not to sustain this expectation."

From a promise like this, at once fer-
 vid, pious, and rational, might be ex-
 pected the *Paradise Lost*.

He published the same year two more
 pamphlets, upon the same question.
 To one of his antagonists, who affirms
 that he was vomited out of the univer-
 sity, he answers, in general terms;

“ The Fellows of the College wherein I
 “ spent some years, at my parting, after
 “ I had taken two degrees, as the man-
 “ ner is, signified many times how much
 “ better it would content them that I
 “ should stay.—As for the common ap-
 “ probation or dislike of that place, as
 “ now it is, that I should esteem or dis-
 “ esteem myself the more for that, too
 “ simple is the answerer, if he think to
 “ obtain with me. Of small practice
 “ were the physician who could not
 “ judge, by what she and her sister have
 “ of long time vomited, that the worse
 “ stuff she strongly keeps in her stomach,
 “ but the better she is ever keeking at,
 “ and is queasy : she vomits now out of
 “ sickness; but before it be well with
 “ her,

"her, she must vomit by strong physick.
 "The university, in the time of her
 "better health, and my younger judge-
 "ment, I never greatly admired, but
 "now much less."

"This is surely the language of a man
 "who thinks that he has been injured.
 He proceeds to describe the course of
 his conduct, and the train of his
 thoughts; and, because he has been
 suspected of incontinence, gives an ac-
 count of his own purity: "That if I
 "be justly charged," says he, "with
 "this crime, it may come upon me with
 "tenfold shame."

"The stile of his piece is rough, and
 "such perhaps was that of his antagonist.
 "This roughness he justifies, by great ex-
 "amples,

amples, in a long digression. Sometimes
 he tries to be humorous: "Left I should
 " take him for some chaplain in hand,
 " some squire of the body to his pre-
 " late, one who serves not at the altar
 " only but at the Court-cupboard, he
 " will bestow on us a pretty model of
 " himself; and sets me out half a dozen
 " aptical mottos, wherever he had them,
 " hopping short in the measure of con-
 " vulsion fits; in which labour the
 " agony of his wit having scaped nar-
 " rowly, instead of well-sized periods,
 " he greets us with a quantity of
 " thumbing posies.—And thus ends this
 " section, or rather dissection of him-
 " self." Such is the controversial mer-
 riment of Milton: his gloomy serious-
 ness

ness is yet more offensive. Such is his malignity, *that hell grows darker at his frown.*

His father, after Reading was taken by *Effra*, came to reside in his house; and his school increased. At Whitfuntide, in his thirty-fifth year, he married *Mary*, the daughter of *Mr. Powell*, a justice of the peace in Oxfordshire. He brought her to town with him, and expected all the advantages of a conjugal life. The lady, however, seems not much to have delighted in the pleasures of spare diet and hard study; for, as *Philips* relates, “having for a month led “ a philosophical life, after having been “ used at home to a great house, and “ much company and joviality, her

d 4

“ friends,

“friends, possibly by her own desire;
 “made earnest suit to have her company;
 “the remaining part of the summer;
 “which was granted, upon a promise of
 “her return at Michaelmas.”

Milton was too busy to much miss his wife: he pursued his studies; and now and then visited the lady Margaret Leigh, whom he has mentioned in one of his sonnets. At last Michaelmas arrived; but the lady had no inclination to return to the sullen gloom of her husband's habitation, and therefore very willingly forgot her promise. He sent her a letter, but had no answer; he sent more with the same success. It could be alleged that letters miscarry; he therefore dispatched a messenger, being by

this time too angry to go himself. His messenger was sent back with some contempt. The family of the lady were Cavaliers.

In a man, whose opinion of his own merit was like Milton's, less provocation than this might have raised violent resentment. Milton soon determined to repudiate her for disobedience; and, being one of those who could easily find arguments to justify inclination, published (in 1644) *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*; which was followed by *The Judgement of Martin Bucer concerning Divorce*; and the next year, his Tracthordon, *Expositions upon the four chief Places of Scripture which treat of Marriage*.

This

This innovation was opposed, as might be expected, by the clergy; who, then holding their famous assembly at Westminster, procured that the author should be called before the Lords; “but at that house,” says Wood, “whether approving the doctrine, or not favouring his accusers, did soon dismiss him.”

There seems not to have been much written against him, nor any thing by any writer of eminence. The antagonist that appeared is styled by him, *a Serving-man turned Solicitor*. Howel in his letters mentions the new doctrine with contempt; and it was, I suppose, thought more worthy of derision than of confutation. He complains of this neglect

neglect, in two sonnets, of which the first is contemptible; and the second not excellent.

From this time it is observed that he became an enemy to the Presbyterians, whom he had favoured before. He that changes his party by his humour, is not more virtuous than he that changes it by his interest; he loves himself rather than truth.

His wife and her relations now found that Milton was not an unresisting sufferer of injuries; and perceiving that he had begun to put his doctrine in practice, by courting a young woman of great accomplishments, the daughter of one Doctor Davis, who was however not ready to comply, they resolved to

to endeavour a re-union. He went sometimes to the house of one Blackborough, his relation, in the lane of St. Martin's-le-Grand, and at one of his usual visits was surpris'd to see his wife come from another room, and implore forgiveness on her knees. He resisted her intreaties for awhile; "but partly," says Phillips, "his own generous nature, more inclinable to reconciliation than to perseverance in anger or revenge, and partly the strong intercession of friends on both sides, soon brought him to an act of oblivion and a firm league of peace." It were injurious to omit, that Milton afterwards received her father and her brothers in his own house, when

when they were distressed, with other Royalists.

He published about the same time his *Areopagitica, a Speech of Mr. John Milton for the liberty of unlicensed Printing*. The danger of such unbounded liberty, and the danger of bounding it, have produced a problem in the science of Government, which human understanding seems hitherto unable to solve. If nothing may be published but what civil authority shall have previously approved, power must always be the standard of truth; if every dreamer of innovations may propagate his projects, there can be no settlement; if every murmurer at government may diffuse discontent, there can be no peace; and if every sceptick

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in theology may teach his follies, there can be no religion. The remedy against these evils is to punish the authors; for it is yet allowed that every society may punish, though not prevent, the publication of opinions, which that society shall think pernicious: but this punishment, though it may crush the author, promotes the book; and it seems no more reasonable to leave the right of printing unrestrained, because writers may be afterwards censured, than it would be to sleep with doors unbolted, because by our laws we can hang a thief.

But whatever were his engagements, civil or domestick, poetry was never long out of his thoughts. About this
time

time (1645) a collection of his Latin and English poems appeared, in which the *Allegro* and *Penferoso*, with some others, were first published.

He had taken a larger house in Barbican for the reception of scholars; but the numerous relations of his wife, to whom he generously granted refuge for a while, occupied his rooms. In time, however, they went away; and the "house again," says Philips, "now looked like a house of the Muses only," though the accession of scholars was "not great. Possibly his having proceeded so far in the education of youth, may have been the occasion of his adversaries calling him pedagogue and school-master; whereas it is well

" known

“ known he never set up for a publick
 “ school, to teach all the young fry of
 “ a parish; but only was willing to im-
 “ part his learning and knowledge to
 “ relations, and the sons of gentlemen
 “ who were his intimate friends; and
 “ that neither his writings nor his way
 “ of teaching ever favoured in the least
 “ of pedantry.”

Thus laboriously does his nephew ex-
 temuate what cannot be denied, and
 what might be confessed without dis-
 grace. Milton was not a man who could
 become mean by a mean employment.
 This, however, his warmest friends seem
 not to have found; they therefore shift
 and palliate. He did not sell literature
 to all comers at an open shop; he was
 a cham-

a chamber-milliner, and measured his commodities only to his friends.

Philips, evidently impatient of viewing him in this state of degradation, tells us that it was not long continued; and, to raise his character again, has a mind to invest him with military splendour: "He is much mistaken," he says, "if there was not about this time a design of making him an adjutant-general in Sir William Waller's army. But the new-modelling of the army proved an obstruction to the design." An event cannot be set at a much greater distance than by having been only *designed, about some time*, if a man be not much mistaken. Milton shall be a pedagogue no longer; for, if Philips

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be

be not mistaken, somebody at some time designed him for a soldier.

About the time that the army was new-modelled (1645) he removed to a smaller house in Holbourn, which opened backward into Lincoln's-Inn-Fields. He is not known to have published any thing afterwards till the king's death; when, finding his murderers condemned by the Presbyterians, he wrote a treatise to justify it, and *to compose the minds of the people.*

He made some *Remarks on the Articles of Peace between Ormond and the Irish Rebels.* While he contented himself to write, he perhaps did only what his conscience dictated; and if he did not very vigilantly watch the influence of his

his own passions, and the gradual prevalence of opinions, first willingly admitted and then habitually indulged, if objections, by being overlooked, were forgotten, and desire superinduced conviction, he yet shared only the common weakness of mankind, and might be no less sincere than his opponents. But as faction seldom leaves a man honest, however it might find him, Milton is suspected of having interpolated the book called *Icon Basilike*, which the Council of State, to whom he was now made Latin secretary, employed him to censure, by inserting a prayer taken from *Sidney's Arcadia*, and imputing it to the king; whom he charges, in his *Iconoclastes*, with the use of this prayer as with a heavy

crime, in the indecent language with which prosperity had emboldened the advocates for rebellion to insult all that is venerable or great: “ Who would have “ imagined so little fear in him of the “ true all-seeing Deity—as, immediately “ before his death, to pop into the “ hands of the grave bishop that attended him, as a special relique of “ his faintly exercises, a prayer stolen “ word for word from the mouth of a “ heathen woman praying to a heathen “ god ?”

The papers which the king gave to Dr. Juxon on the scaffold the regicides took away, so that they were at least the publishers of this prayer; and Dr. Birch, who examined the question with
great

great care, was inclined to think them the forgers. The use of it by adaptation was innocent; and they who could so noisily censure it, with a little extension of their malice could contrive what they wanted to accuse.

King Charles the Second, being now sheltered in Holland, employed Salmasius, professor of Polite Learning at Leyden, to write a defence of his father and of monarchy; and, to excite his industry, gave him, as was reported, a hundred Jacobuses. Salmasius was a man of skill in languages, knowledge of antiquity, and sagacity of emendatory criticism, almost exceeding all hope of human attainment; and having, by excessive praises, been confirmed in great

confidence of himself, though he probably had not much considered the principles of society or the rights of government, undertook the employment without distrust of his own qualifications ; and, as his expedition in writing was wonderful, in 1649 published *Defensio Regis*.

To this Milton was required to write a sufficient answer ; which he performed (1651) in such a manner, that Hobbes declared himself unable to decide whose language was best, or whose arguments were worst. In my opinion, Milton's periods are smoother, neater, and more pointed ; but he delights himself with teizing his adversary as much as with confuting him. He makes a foolish allusion of

Salma-

Salmafus, whose doctrine he considers as servile and unmanly, to the stream of *Salmacis*, which whoever entered left half his virility behind him. Salmafus was a Frenchman, and was unhappily married to a scold. *Tu es Gallus*, says Milton, *et, ut aiunt, nimium gallinaceus*. But his supreme pleasure is to tax his adversary, so renowned for criticism, with vitious Latin. He opens his book with telling that he has used *Persana*, which, according to Milton, signifies only a *Mask*, in a sense not known to the Romans, by applying it as we apply *Person*. But as Nemesis is always on the watch, it is memorable that he has enforced the charge of a solecism by an expression in itself grossly solecistical,

when, for one of those supposed blunders, he says, *propino te grammaticis tuis vapulandum*. From *vapulo*, which has a passive sense, *vapulandus* can never be derived. No man forgets his original trade: the rights of nations, and of kings, sink into questions of grammar, if grammarians discuss them.

Milton when he undertook this answer was weak of body, and dim of sight; but his will was forward, and what was wanting of health was supplied by zeal. He was rewarded with a thousand pounds, and his book was much read; for paradox, recommended by spirit and elegance, easily gains attention; and he who told every man that he

was equal to his king, could hardly want an audience.

That the performance of Salmasius was not dispersed with equal rapidity, or read with equal eagerness, is very credible. He taught only the stale doctrine of authority, and the unpleasing duty of submission; and he had been so long not only the monarch but the tyrant of literature, that almost all mankind were delighted to find him defied and insulted by a new name, not yet considered as any one's rival. If Christina, as is said, commended the *Defence of the People*, her purpose must be to torment Salmasius, who was then at her Court; for neither her civil station nor her natural character could dispose her to
favour

favour the doctrine, who was by birth a queen, and by temper despotick.

That Salmasius was, from the appearance of Milton's book, treated with neglect, there is not much proof; but to a man so long accustomed to admiration, a little praise of his antagonist would be sufficiently offensive, and might incline him to leave Sweden.

He prepared a reply, which, left as it was imperfect, was published by his son in the year of the Restauration. In the beginning, being probably most in pain for his Latinity, he endeavours to defend his use of the word *persona*; but, if I remember right, he misses a better authority than any that he has found, that of Juvenal in his fourth satire:

— Quid

—Quid agas cum dira & foedior omni
Crimine *Persona* est?

As Salmasius reproached Milton with losing his eyes in the quarrel, Milton delighted himself with the belief that he had shortened Salmasius's life, and both perhaps with more malignity than reason. Salmasius died at the Spa, Sept. 3, 1653; and as controvertists are commonly said to be killed by their last dispute, Milton was flattered with the credit of destroying him.

Cromwel had now dismissed the parliament by the authority of which he had destroyed monarchy, and commenced monarch himself, under the title of protector, but with kingly and more than kingly power. That his authority was law-

lawful, never was pretended; he himself founded his right only in necessity; but Milton, having now tasted the honey of publick employment, would not return to hunger and philosophy, but, continuing to exercise his office under a manifest usurpation, betrayed to his power that liberty which he had defended. Nothing can be more just than that rebellion should end in slavery; that he, who had justified the murder of his king, for some acts which to him seemed unlawful, should now sell his services, and his flatteries, to a tyrant, of whom it was evident that he could do nothing lawful.

He had now been blind for some years; but his vigour of intellect was such,

such, that he was not disabled to discharge his office, or continue his controversies. His mind was too eager to be diverted, and too strong to be subdued.

About this time his first wife died in childbed, having left him three daughters. As he probably did not much love her, he did not long continue the appearance of lamenting her ; but after a short time married Catherine, the daughter of one captain Woodcock of Hackney ; a woman doubtless educated in opinions like his own. She died within a year, of childbirth, or some distemper that followed it ; and her husband has honoured her memory with a poor sonnet.

The

The first Reply to Milton's *Defensio Populi* was published in 1651, called *Apologia pro Rege & Populo Anglicano, contra Johannis Polypragmatici (alias Miltoni) defensionem destructivam Regis & Populi*. Of this the author was not known; but Milton and his nephew Phillips, under whose name he published an answer so much corrected by him that it might be called his own, imputed it to Bramhal; and, knowing him no friend to regicides, thought themselves at liberty to treat him as if they had known what they only suspected.

Next year appeared *Regii Sanguinis clamor ad Cælum*. Of this the author was Peter du Moulin, who was afterwards prebendary of Canterbury; but Morus,

or

or More, a French minister, having the care of its publication, was treated as the writer by Milton, in his *Defensio Secunda*, and overwhelmed by such violence of invective, that he began to shrink under the tempest, and gave his persecutors the means of knowing the true author. Du Moulin was now in great danger; but Milton's pride operated against his malignity, and both he and his friends were more willing that Du Moulin should escape than that he should be convicted of mistake.

In this second Defence he shews that his eloquence is not merely satirical; the rudeness of his invective is equalled by the grossness of his flattery. "Deferimur, Cromuelle, tu solus superes,"
 "ad

“ ad te summa nostrarum rerum rediit,
 “ in te solo consistit, insuperabili tuæ
 “ virtuti cedimus cuncti, nemine vel
 “ obloquente, nisi qui æquales. Inæqua-
 “ lis ipse honores sibi quærit, aut dig-
 “ niori concessos invidet, aut non intel-
 “ ligit nihil esse in societate hominum
 “ magis vel Deo gratum, vel rationi
 “ consentaneum, esse in civitate nihil
 “ æquius, nihil utilius, quam potius
 “ rerum dignissimum. Eum te agnos-
 “ scunt omnes, Cromuelle, ea tu civis
 “ maximus et * gloriosissimus, dux pub-
 “ lici consilii, exercituum fortissimorum

* It may be doubted whether *gloriosissimus* be
 here used with Milton's boasted purity. *Res gloriosa*
 is an *illustrious thing*; but *vir gloriosus* is commonly
 a *braggart*, as in *miles gloriosus*.

“ im-

"imperator, pater patriæ gessisti. Sic
 "spontanea bonorum omnium et ani-
 "mita, missa voce salutaris."

Caesar, when he assumed the perpe-
 tual dictatorship, had not more servile
 or more elegant flattery. A translation
 may shew its servility; but its elegance
 is less attainable. Having exposed the
 unskilfulness or selfishness of the for-
 mer government, "We were left," says
 Milton, "to ourselves; the whole na-
 "tional interest fell into your hands,
 "and subsists in your abilities. To your
 "virtue, overpowering and resistless,
 "every man gives way, except some
 "who, without equal qualifications,
 "aspire to equal honours, or who envy
 "the distinctions of merit greater than
 f "their

“ their own; or who have yet to learn,
 “ that in the coalition of human society
 “ nothing is more pleasing to God, or
 “ more agreeable to reason, than that
 “ the highest mind should have the
 “ sovereign power. Such, Sir, are
 “ you by general confession; such are
 “ the things atchieved by you, the
 “ greatest and most glorious of our
 “ countrymen, the director of our pub-
 “ lick counsels, the leader of uncon-
 “ quered armies, the father of your
 “ country; for by that title does every
 “ good man hail you, with sincere and
 “ voluntary praise.”

Next year, having defended all that
 wanted defence, he found leisure to de-
 fend himself. He undertook his own
 4 vindi-

vindication against More, whom he declares in his title to be justly called the author of the *Regii Sanguini clamor*. In this there is no want of vehemence nor eloquence, nor does he forget his wonted wit. "Morus es? an Momus? an "uterque idem est?" He then remembers that *Morus* is Latin for a Mulberry-tree, and hints at the known transformation:

—Poma alba ferebat

Quæ post nigra tulit Morus.

With this piece ended his controversies; and he from this time gave himself up to his private studies and his civil employment.

As secretary to the Protector he is supposed to have written the Declara-

tion of the reasons for a war with Spain. His agency was considered as of great importance; for when a treaty with Sweden was artfully suspended, the delay was publickly imputed to Mr. Milton's indisposition; and the Swedish agent was provoked to express his wonder, that only one man in England could write Latin, and that man blind.

Being now forty-seven years old, and seeing himself disencumbered from external interruptions, he seems to have recollected his former purposes, and planned three great works for his future employment. An epick poem, the history of his country, and a dictionary of the Latin tongue.

To

To collect a dictionary seems a work of all others least practicable in a state of blindness, because it depends upon perpetual and minute inspection and collation. Nor would Milton probably have begun it, after he had lost his eyes; but, having had it always before him, he continued it, says Philips, *almost to his dying-day; but the papers were so discomposed and deficient, that they could not be fitted for the press.* The compilers of the Latin dictionary, printed afterwards at Cambridge, had the use of them in three folios; but what was their fate afterwards is not known.

To compile a history from various authors, when they can only be consulted by other eyes, is not easy, nor possible, but

with more skilful and attentive help than can be commonly obtained; and it was probably the difficulty of consulting and comparing that stopped Milton's narrative at the Conquest; a period at which affairs were not yet very intricate, nor authors very numerous.

For the subject of his epick poem, after much deliberation, *long chusing, and beginning late*, he fixed upon *Paradise Lost*; a design so comprehensive, that it could be justified only by success. He had once designed to celebrate king Arthur, as appears from his verses to Manus; but Arthur was reserved, says Fenton, to another destiny.

It appears, by some sketches of poetical projects left in manuscripts, and to be

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be seen in a library at Cambridge, that he had digested his thoughts on this subject into one of those wild dramas which were anciently called *Mysteries*; and Philips had seen what he terms part of a tragedy, beginning with the first ten lines of Satan's address to the Sun. These mysteries consist of allegorical persons; such as *Justice, Mercy, Faith*. Of the tragedy or mystery of *Paradise Lost* there are two plans:

The Persons.

The Persons.

Michael.

Moses.

Chorus of Angels.

Divine Justice, Wis-

Heavenly Love.

dom, Heavenly

Lucifer.

Love.

Adam, } with the

The Evening Star,

Eve, } Serpent.

Hesperus.

Con-

f 4

Con-

Conscience. Chorus of Angels.

Death. Lucifer.

Labour, } Adam.

Sickness, } Eve.

Discontent, } Mutes. Conscience.

Ignorance, } Labour, }

with others, } Sickness, }

Faith. } Discontent, } Mutes.

Hope. } Ignorance, }

Charity. } Fear, }

Death, }

Faith.

Hope.

Charity.

Paradise Lost.

The Persons.

Moses, *μεταμορφωσις*, recounting how he assumed his true body; that it corrupts not, because it is with God in the mount; declares the like of Enoch and

Elijah;

Elijah; besides the purity of the place,
that certain pure winds, dews and clouds;
preserve it from corruption; whence ex-
horts to the sight of God; tells, they
cannot see Adam in the state of inno-
cence, by reason of their sin.

Justice,	} debating what should be
Mercy,	
Wisdom,	
come of man, if he fall.	

Chorus of Angels singing a hymn of the
Creation.

ACT II.

Heavenly Love.

Evening Star.

Chorus sing the marriage-song, and de-
scribe Paradise.

ACT

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A C T III.

Lucifer, contriving Adam's ruin.

Chorus fears for Adam, and relates Lucifer's rebellion and fall.

A C T IV.

Adam, }
Eve, } fallen.

Conscience cites them to God's examination.

Chorus bewails, and tells the good Adam has lost.

A C T V.

Adam and Eve driven out of Paradise.

— — presented by an angel with

Labour, Grief, Hatred, En-
vy, War, Famine, Pesti-
lence, Sickneſs, Diſcon- } Mutes,
tent, Ignorance, Fear, }
Death,

To whom he gives their names. Like-
wife Winter, Heat, Tempest, &c.

Faith,	}	comfort him, and instruct him.
Hope,		
Charity,		

Chorus briefly concludes.

Such was his first design, which could
have produced only an allegory, or myf-
tery. The following sketch seems to
have attained more maturity.

Adam unparadised :

The angel Gabriel, either descending
or entering ; shewing, since this globe
was created, his frequency as much on
earth as in heaven : describes Paradise.
Next, the Chorus, shewing the reason
of

of his coming to keep his watch in Paradise, after Lucifer's rebellion, by command from God; and withal expressing his desire to see and know more concerning this excellent new creature, man. The angel Gabriel, as by his name signifying a prince of power, tracing Paradise with a more free office, passes by the station of the Chorus, and, desired by them, relates what he knew of man; as the creation of Eve, with their love and marriage. After this, Lucifer appears, after his overthrow; bemoans himself, seeks revenge on man. The Chorus prepare resistance at his first approach. At last, after discourse of enmity on either side, he departs; whereat the Chorus sings of the battle and
victo-

victory in heaven, against him and his accomplices : as before, after the first act, was sung a hymn of the creation. Here again may appear Lucifer, relating and insulting in what he had done to the destruction of man. Man next, and Eve having by this time been seduced by the Serpent, appears confusedly covered with leaves. Conscience, in a shape, accuses him; Justice cites him to the place whither Jehovah called for him. In the mean while, the Chorus entertains the stage, and is informed by some angel the manner of the Fall. Here the Chorus bewails Adam's fall; Adam then and Eve return; accuse one another; but especially Adam lays the blame to his wife; is stubborn in his offence.

fence. Justice appears, reasons with him, convinces him. The Chorus admonisheth Adam, and bids him beware Lucifer's example of impenitence. The angel is sent to banish them out of Paradise; but before causes to pass before his eyes, in shapes, a mask of all the evils of this life and world. He is humbled, relents, despairs: at last appears Mercy, comforts him, promises the Messiah; then calls in Faith, Hope, and Charity; instructs him; he repents, gives God the glory, submits to his penalty. The Chorus briefly concludes. Compare this with the former draught."

These are very imperfect rudiments of *Paradise Lost*; but it is pleasant to see

see great works in their fœtinal state, pregnant with latent possibilities of excellence; nor could there be any more delightful entertainment than to trace their gradual growth and expansion, and to observe how they are sometimes suddenly advanced by accidental hints, and sometimes slowly improved by steady meditation.

Invention is almost the only literary labour which blindness cannot obstruct; and therefore he naturally solaced his solitude by the indulgence of his fancy, and the melody of his numbers. He had done what he knew to be necessarily previous to poetical excellence; he had made himself acquainted with *seemly arts and affairs*; his comprehension was

ex-

extended by various knowledge, and his memory stored with intellectual treasures. . . . He was skilful in many languages, and had by reading and composition attained the full mastery of his own. He would have wanted little help from books, had he attained the power of perusing them. . . .

But while his greater designs were advancing, having now, like many other authors, caught the love of publication, he amused himself, as he could, with little productions. He sent to the press (1658) a manuscript of Raleigh, called the *Cabinet Council*; and next year gratified his malevolence to the clergy, by a *Treatise of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Cases*,

Cases, and the Means of removing Heresies out of the Church.

Oliver was now dead; Richard was constrained to resign the system of extraordinary government, which had been held together only by force, naturally fell into fragments when that force was taken away; and Milton saw himself and his cause in equal danger. But he had still hope of doing something. He wrote letters, which Toland has published, to such men as he thought friends to the new commonwealth; and even in the year of the Restoration he *bated no jot of heart or hope*, but was fantastical enough to think that the nation, agitated as it was, might be settled by a pamphlet, called *A ready and easy Way to establish a*

Free Commonwealth; which was, however, enough considered to be both seriously and ludicrously answered.

The obstinate enthusiasm of the commonwealthmen was very remarkable. When the king was apparently returning, Harrington, with a few associates as fanatical as himself, used to meet, with all the gravity of political importance, to settle an equal government by rotation; and Milton, kicking when he could strike no longer, was foolish enough to publish, a few weeks before the Restoration, *Notes* upon a sermon preached by one Griffiths, intituled, *The Fear of God and the King*. To these notes an answer was written by L'Estrange, in

in a pamphlet petulantly called *No blind Guides*.

But whatever Milton could write, or men of greater activity could do, the king was now evidently approaching with the irresistible approbation of the people. He was therefore no longer secretary, and was consequently obliged to quit the house which he held by his office ; and, proportioning his sense of danger to his opinion of the importance of his writings, thought it convenient to seek some shelter, and hid himself for a time in Bartholomew Close by West Smithfield.

I cannot but remark a kind of respect, perhaps unconsciously, paid to this great man by his biographers : every house

in which he resided is historically mentioned, as if it were an injury to neglect naming any place that he honoured by his presence.

The king, with lenity of which the world has had perhaps no other example, declined to be the judge or avenger of his own or his father's wrongs; and promised to admit into the Act of Oblivion all, except those whom the parliament should except; and the parliament doomed none to capital punishment but the wretches who had immediately co-operated in the murder of the king. Milton was certainly not one of them; he had only justified what they had done.

This

This justification was indeed sufficiently offensive; and (June 16) an order was issued to seize Milton's *Defence*, and Godwin's *Obstructors of Justice*, another book of the same tendency, and burn them by the common hangman. The attorney-general was ordered to prosecute the authors; but Milton was not seized, nor perhaps very diligently pursued.

Not long after (August 19) the flutter of innumerable bosoms was stilled by an act, which the king, that his mercy might want no recommendation of elegance, rather called an *act of oblivion* than of *grace*. Godwin was named, with nineteen more, as incapacitated for

any publick trust; but of Milton there was no exception.

Of this tenderneſs ſhewn to Milton, the curioſity of mankind has not forborn to enquire the reaſon. Burnet thinks he was forgotten; but this is another inſtance which may confirm Dalrymple's obſervation, who ſays, " that
 " whenever Burnet's narrations are exa-
 " mined, he appears to be miſtaken."

Forgotten he was not; for his proſecution was ordered; it muſt be therefore by deſign that he was included in the general oblivion. He is ſaid to have had friends in the Houſe, ſuch as Marvel, Morrice, and Sir Thomas Clarges; and undoubtedly a man like him muſt have had influence. A very particular

Story of his escape is told by Richardson in his Memoirs, which he received from Pope, as delivered by Betterton, who might have heard it from Davenant. In the war between the king and parliament, Davenant was made prisoner, and condemned to die; but was spared at the request of Milton. When the turn of success brought Milton into the like danger, Davenant repaid the benefit by appearing in his favour. Here is a reciprocation of generosity and gratitude so pleasing, that the tale makes its own way to credit. But if help were wanted, I know not where to find it. The danger of Davenant is certain from his own relation; but of his escape there is no account. Betterton's narration can

be traced no higher; it is not known that he had it from Davenant. We are told that the benefit exchanged was life for life; but it seems not certain that Milton's life ever was in danger. Godwin, who had committed the same kind of crime, escaped with incapacitation; and as exclusion from publick trust is a punishment which the power of government can commonly inflict without the help of a particular law, it required no great interest to exempt Milton from a censure little more than verbal. Something may be reasonably ascribed to veneration and compassion; to veneration of his abilities, and compassion for his distresses, which made it fit to forgive his malice for his learning. He was

now

now poor and blind; and who would pursue with violence an illustrious enemy, depressed by fortune, and disarmed by nature?

The publication of the act of oblivion put him in the same condition with his fellow-subjects. He was, however, upon some pretence not now known, in the custody of the serjeant in December; and, when he was released, upon his refusal of the fees demanded, he and the serjeant were called before the House. He was now safe within the shade of oblivion, and knew himself to be as much out of the power of a griping officer as any other man. How the question was determined is not known. Milton would hardly have contended,

tended, but that he knew himself to have right on his side.

He then removed to Jewin-street, near Aldersgate-street; and being blind, and by no means wealthy, wanted a domestick companion and attendant; and therefore, by the recommendation of Dr. Paget, married Elizabeth Minshul, of a gentleman's family in Cheshire, probably without a fortune. All his wives were virgins; for he has declared that he thought it gross and indelicate to be a second husband: upon what other principles his choice was made, cannot now be known; but marriage afforded not much of his happiness. The first wife left him in disgust, and was brought back only by terror: the second,

cond, indeed, seems to have been more a favourite ; but her life was short. The third, as Philips relates, oppressed his children in his life-time, and cheated them at his death.

Soon after his marriage, according to an obscure story, he was offered the continuance of his employment ; and being pressed by his wife to accept it, answered, “ You, like other women, want “ to ride in your coach ; my wish is to “ live and die an honest man.” If he considered the Latin secretary as exercising any of the powers of government, he that had shared authority either with the parliament or Cromwel, might have forborn to talk very loudly of his honesty ; and if he thought the office
pure-

purely ministerial, he certainly might have honestly retained it under the king. But this tale has too little evidence to deserve a disquisition; large offers and sturdy rejections are among the most common topics of falsehood.

He had so much either of prudence or gratitude, that he forbore to disturb the new settlement with any of his political or ecclesiastical opinions, and from this time devoted himself to poetry and literature. Of his zeal for learning, in all its parts, he gave a proof by publishing, the next year (1661) *Accidence commenced Grammar*; a little book which has nothing remarkable, but that its author, who had been lately defending the supreme powers of his country, and

was

was then writing *Paradise Lost*, could descend from his elevation to rescue children from the perplexity of grammatical confusion, and the trouble of lessons unnecessarily repeated.

About this time Elwood the quaker being recommended to him, as one who would read Latin to him, for the advantage of his conversation; attended him every afternoon, except on Sundays. Milton, who, in his letter to Hartlib, had declared, that *to read Latin with an English mouth is as ill a bearing as Law French*, required that Elwood should learn and practise the Italian pronunciation, which, he said, was necessary, if he would talk with foreigners. This seems to have been a task

task troublesome without use. There is little reason for preferring the Italian pronunciation to our own, except that it is more general; and to teach it to an Englishman is only to make him a foreigner at home. He who travels, if he speaks Latin, may so soon learn the sounds which every native gives it, that he need make no provision before his journey; and if strangers visit us, it is their business to practise such conformity to our modes as they expect from us in their own countries. Elwood complied with the directions, and improved himself by his attendance; for he relates, that Milton, having a curious ear, knew by his voice when he read what he did not understand, and would stop him,

him, and *open the most difficult passages.*

In a short time he took a house in the *Artillery Walk*, leading to *Bunhill Fields*; the mention of which concludes the register of Milton's removals and habitations. He lived longer in this place than in any other.

He was now busied by *Paradise Lost*. Whence he drew the original design has been variously conjectured, by men who cannot bear to think themselves ignorant of that which, at last, neither diligence nor sagacity can discover. Some find the hint in an Italian tragedy; Voltaire tells a wild and unauthorised story of a farce seen by Milton in Italy, which opened thus : *Let the Rainbow be*
the

the Fiddlestick of the Fiddle of Heaven.

It has been already shewn, that the first conception was of a tragedy or mystery, not of a narrative, but a dramatick work, which he is supposed to have begun to reduce to its present form about the time (1655) when he finished his dispute with the defenders of the king.

He long before had promised to adorn his native country by some great performance, while he had yet perhaps no settled design, and was stimulated only by such expectations as naturally arose from the survey of his attainments, and the consciousness of his powers. What he should undertake, it was difficult to determine. He was *long chusing, and began late.*

While he was obliged to divide his time between his private studies and affairs of state, his poetical labour must have been often interrupted; and perhaps he did little more in that busy time than construct the narrative, adjust the episodes, proportion the parts, accumulate images and sentiments, and treasure in his memory, or preserve in writing, such hints as books or meditation would supply. Nothing particular is known of his intellectual operations while he was a statesman; for, having every help and accommodation at hand, he had no need of uncommon expedients.

Being driven from all publick stations, he is yet too great not to be

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traced

traced by curiosity to his retirement ; where he has been found by Mr. Richardson, the fondest of his admirers, sitting before his door in a grey coat of coarse cloth, in warm sultry weather, to enjoy the fresh air ; and so, as well as in his own room, receiving the visits of people of distinguished parts as well as quality. His visitors of high quality must now be imagined to be few ; but men of parts might reasonably court the conversation of a man so generally illustrious, that foreigners are reported, by Wood, to have visited the house in Bread-street where he was born.

According to another account, he was seen in a small house, neatly enough dressed in black cloaths, sitting in a room
bung

being with rusty green; pale but not cadaverous, with chalkstones in his hands. He said; that if it were not for the gout, his blindness would be tolerable.

In the intervals of his pain, being made unable to use the common exercises, he used to swing in a chair, and sometimes played upon an organ.

He was now confessedly and visibly employed upon his poem, of which the progress might be noted by those with whom he was familiar; for he was obliged, when he had composed as many lines as his memory would conveniently retain, to employ some friend in writing them, having, at least for part of the time, no regular attendant. This gave opportunity to observations and reports.

Mr. Philips observes, that there was a very remarkable circumstance in the compofure of *Paradise Lost*, “ which “ I have a particular reason,” fays he, “ to remember ; for whereas I had the “ perufal of it from the very begin- “ ning, for fome years, as I went from “ time to time to vifit him, in parcels “ of ten, twenty, or thirty verfes at a “ time (which, being written by what- “ ever hand came next, might poffibly “ want correction as to the orthography “ and pointing), having, as the Summer “ came on, not been fhewed any for a “ confiderable while ; and defiring the “ reason thereof, was answered, that his “ vein never happily flowed but from “ the Autumnal Equinox to the Vernal ; “ and

M I L T O N for

“and that whatever he attempted at
 “other times was never to his satisfac-
 “tion, though he courted his fancy
 “never so much; so that, in all the
 “years he was about this poem, he may
 “be said to have spent half his time
 “therein.”

Upon this relation Toland remarks,
 that in his opinion Philips has mistaken
 the time of the year; for Milton, in his
 Elegies, declares that with the advance
 of the Spring he feels the increase of
 his poetical force, *redeunt in carmina*
vires. To this it is answered, that Phi-
 lips could hardly mistake time so well
 marked; and it may be added, that Mil-
 ton might find different times of the year
 favourable to different parts of life.

Mr. Richardson conceives it impossible that *such a work should be suspended for six months, or for one. It may go on faster or slower, but it must go on.* By what necessity it must continually go on, or why it might not be laid aside and resumed, it is not easy to discover.

This dependance of the soul upon the seasons, those temporary and periodical ebbs and flows of intellect, may, I suppose, justly be derided as the fumes of vain imagination. *Sapiens dominabitur astris.* The author that thinks himself weather-bound will find, with a little help from hellebore, that he is only idle or exhausted. But while this notion has possession of the head, it produces the inability which it supposes.

Our powers owe much of their energy to our hopes ; *possunt quia posse videntur*.

When success seems attainable, diligence is enforced ; but when it is admitted that the faculties are suppressed by a cross wind, or a cloudy sky, the day is given up without resistance ; for who can contend with the course of Nature ?

From such prepossessions Milton seems not to have been free. There prevailed in his time an opinion that the world was in its decay, and that we have had the misfortune to be produced in the decrepitude of Nature. It was suspected that the whole creation languished, that neither trees nor animals had the height or bulk of their predecessors, and that every thing was daily sinking in gradual

diminution. Milton appears to suspect that souls partake of the general degeneracy, and is not without some fear that his book is to be written in *an age too late* for heroick poesy.

Another opinion wanders about the world, and sometimes finds reception among wise men; an opinion that restrains the operations of the mind to particular regions, and supposes that a luckless mortal may be born in a degree of latitude too high or too low for wisdom or for wit. From this fancy, wild as it is, he had not wholly cleared his head, when he feared lest the *climate* of his country might be *too cold* for flights of imagination.

Into

Into a mind already occupied by such fancies, another not more reasonable might easily find its way. He that could fear lest his genius had fallen upon too old a world, or too chill a climate, might consistently magnify to himself the influences of the seasons, and believe his faculties to be vigorous only half the year.

His submission to the seasons was at least more reasonable than his dread of decaying nature, or a frigid zone; for general causes operate uniformly in a general abatement of mental power: if less could be performed by the writer, less likewise would content the judges of his work. Among this lagging race of frosty grovellers he might still have risen into

eminence by producing something which *they should not willingly let die*. However inferior to the heroes who were born in better ages, he might still be great among his contemporaries, with the hope of growing every day greater in the dwindle of posterity. He might still be the giant of the pygmies, the one-eyed monarch of the blind.

Of his artifices of study, or particular hours of composition, we have little account, and there was perhaps little to be told. Richardson, who seems to have been very diligent in his enquiries, but discovers always a wish to find Milton discriminated from other men, relates, that “he would sometimes lie awake
“ whole nights, but not a verse could
“ he

“ he make; and on a sudden his poeti-
 “ cal faculty would rush upon him with
 “ an *impetus*, or *æstrum*; and his daugh-
 “ ter was immediately called to secure
 “ what came. At other times he would
 “ dictate perhaps forty lines in a breath,
 “ and then reduce them to half the
 “ number.”

These bursts of light, and involu-
 tions of darkness; these transient and
 involuntary excursions and retrocessions
 of invention, having some appearance
 of deviation from the common train of
 Nature, are eagerly caught by the lovers
 of a wonder. Yet something of this
 inequality happens to every man in every
 mode of exertion; manual or mental.
 The mechanick cannot handle his ham-
 mer

per and his file at all times with equal dexterity; there are hours, he knows not why, when *his hand is out*. By Mr. Richardson's relation, casually conveyed, much regard cannot be claimed. That, in his intellectual hour, Milton called for his daughter *to secure what came*, may be questioned; for unluckily it happens to be known that his daughters were never taught to write; nor would he have been obliged, as is universally confessed, to have employed any casual visiter in disburthening his memory, if his daughter could have performed the office.

The story of reducing his exuberance has been told of other authors, and though doubtless true of every
fer-

fertile and copious mind, seems to have been gratuitously transferred to Milton.

What he has told us, and we cannot now know more, is, that he composed much of his poem in the night and morning, I suppose before his mind was disturbed with common business; and that he poured out with great fluency his *unpremeditated verse*. Versification, free, like his, from the distresses of rhyme, must, by a work so long, be made prompt and habitual; and, when his thoughts were once adjusted, the words would come at his command.

At what particular times of his life the parts of his work were written, cannot often be known. The beginning of the third book shews that he had lost his

his fight; and the Introduction to the seventh, that the return of the king had clouded him with discountenance; and that he was offended by the licentious festivity of the Restoration. There are no other internal notes of time. Milton, being now cleared from all effects of his disloyalty, had nothing required from him but the common duty of living in quiet, to be rewarded with the common right of protection: but this, which, when he sculked from the approach of his king, was perhaps more than he hoped, seems not to have satisfied him; for no sooner is he safe than he finds himself in danger, *fallen on evil days and evil tongues, and with darkness and with danger compass'd round.*

This

This darkness, had his eyes been better employed, had undoubtedly deserved compassion; but to add the mention of danger was ungrateful and unjust. He was fallen indeed on *evil days*; the time was come in which regicides could no longer boast their wickedness. But of *evil tongues* for Milton to complain, required impudence at least equal to his other powers; Milton, whose warmest advocates must allow, that he never spared any asperity of reproach or brutality of insolence.

But the charge itself seems to be false; for it would be hard to recollect any reproach cast upon him, either serious or ludicrous, through the whole remaining part of his life. He pursued his studies, &

or

or his amusements; without persecution, molestation, or insult. Such is the reverence paid to great abilities, however misused: they who contemplated in Milton the scholar and the wit, were contented to forget the reviler of his king.

When the plague (1665) raged in London, Milton took refuge at Chalfont in Essex; where Elwood, who had taken the house for him, first saw a complete copy of *Paradise Lost*, and, having perused it, said to him, "Thou hast said a great deal upon *Paradise Lost*;" "what hast thou to say upon *Paradise Found*?"

Next year, when the danger of infection had ceased, he returned to

Bunhill-

Bonhill fields, and designed the publication of his poem. A license was necessary, and he could expect no great kindness from a chaplain of the archbishop of Canterbury. He seems, however, to have been treated with tenderness; for though objections were made to particular passages, and among them to the simile of the sun eclipsed in the first book, yet the license was granted; and he sold his copy, April 27, 1667, to Samuel Simmons for an immediate payment of five pounds, with a stipulation to receive five pounds more when thirteen hundred should be sold of the first edition; and again, five pounds after the sale of the same number of the second edition, and another five pounds:

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after

after the same sale of the third. None of the three editions were to be extended beyond fifteen hundred copies.

The first edition was of ten books, in a small quarto. The titles were varied from year to year; and an advertisement and the arguments of the books were omitted in some copies, and inserted in others.

The sale gave him in two years a right to his second payment, for which the receipt was signed April 26, 1669. The second edition was not given till 1674; it was printed in small octavo; and the number of books was increased to twelve, by a division of the seventh and twelfth; and some other small improvements were made. The
 5 third

third edition was published in 1678; and the widow, to whom the copy was then to devolve, sold all her claims to Simmons for eight pounds, according to her receipt given Dec. 21, 1680. Simmons had already agreed to transfer the whole right to Brabazon Aylmer for twenty-five pounds; and Aylmer sold to Jacob Tonson half, August 17, 1683, and half, March 24, 1690, at a price considerably enlarged.

The slow sale and tardy reputation of this poem, have been always mentioned as evidences of neglected merit, and of the uncertainty of literary fame; and enquiries have been made, and conjectures offered, about the causes of its long obscurity and late reception. But

has the case been truly stated? Have not lamentation and wonder been lavished on an evil that was never felt?

That in the reigns of Charles and James the *Paradise Lost* received no publick acclamations is readily confessed. Wit and literature were on the side of the Court: and who that solicited favour or the fashion would venture to praise the defender of the regicides? All that he himself could think his due, from *evil tongues* in *evil days*, was that reverential silence which was generously preserved. But it cannot be inferred that his poem was not read, or not, however unwillingly, admired.

The sale, if it be considered, will justify the publick. Those who have no

power to judge of past times but by their own, should always doubt their conclusions. The sale of books was not in Milton's age what it is in the present. To read was not then a general amusement; neither traders, nor often gentlemen, thought themselves disgraced by ignorance. The women had not then aspired to literature, nor was every house supplied with a closet of books. Those indeed, who professed learning, were not less learned than at any other time; but of that middle race of students who read for pleasure or accomplishment, and who buy the numerous products of modern typography, the number was then comparatively small. To prove the paucity of readers, it may be suffi-

cient to remark, that the nation had been satisfied, from 1623 to 1664, that is, forty-one years, with only two editions of the works of Shakespeare, which probably did not together make one thousand copies.

The sale of thirteen hundred copies in two years, in opposition to so much recent enmity, and to a style of versification new to all and disgusting to many, was an uncommon example of the prevalence of genius. The demand did not immediately encrease; for many more readers than were supplied at first the nation did not afford. Only three thousand were sold in eleven years; for it forced its way without assistance: its admirers did not dare to publish their
opi-

opinion; and the opportunities now given of attracting notice by advertisements were then very few; for the means of proclaiming the publication of new books have been produced by that general literature which now pervades the nation through all its ranks.

But the reputation and price of the copy still advanced, till the Revolution put an end to the secrecy of love, and *Paradise Lost* broke into open view with sufficient security of kind reception.

Fancy can hardly forbear to conjecture with what temper Milton surveyed the silent progress of his work, and marked his reputation stealing its way in a kind of subterraneous current through fear and silence. I can-

not but conceive him calm and confident, little disappointed, not at all dejected, relying on his own merit with steady consciousness, and waiting, without impatience, the vicissitudes of opinion, and the impartiality of a future generation.

In the mean time he continued his studies, and supplied the want of sight by a very odd expedient, of which Philips gives the following account :

Mr. Philips tells us, “ that though
 “ our author had daily about him one
 “ or other to read, some persons of man’s
 “ estate, who, of their own accord,
 “ greedily caught at the opportunity
 “ of being his readers, that they might
 “ as well reap the benefit of what they
 “ read

“ read to him, as oblige him by the be-
 “ nefit of their reading; and others of
 “ younger years were sent by their pa-
 “ rents to the same end: yet excusing
 “ only the eldest daughter, by reason
 “ of her bodily infirmity, and difficult
 “ utterance of speech, (which, to say
 “ truth, I doubt was the principal cause
 “ of excusing her) the other two were
 “ condemned to the performance of
 “ reading, and exactly pronouncing of
 “ all the languages of whatever book
 “ he should, at one time or other, think
 “ fit to peruse, viz. the Hebrew (and I
 “ think the Syriac), the Greek, the
 “ Latin, the Italian, Spanish, and French.
 “ All which sorts of books to be con-
 “ fined to read, without understanding
 “ one

“ one word, must needs be a trial of
 “ patience almost beyond endurance.
 “ Yet it was endured by both for a long
 “ time, though the irksomeness of this
 “ employment could not be always con-
 “ cealed, but broke out more and more
 “ into expressions of uneasiness; so that
 “ at length they were all, even the el-
 “ dest also, sent out to learn some cu-
 “ rious and ingenious sorts of manu-
 “ facture, that are proper for women to
 “ learn; particularly, embroideries in
 “ gold or silver.”

In the scene of misery which this
 mode of intellectual labour sets before
 our eyes, it is hard to determine whe-
 ther the daughters or the father are
 most to be lamented. A language not
 under-

understood can never be so read as to give pleasure, and very seldom so as to convey meaning. If few men would have had resolution to write books with such embarrassments, few likewise would have wanted ability to find some better expedient.

Three years after his *Paradise Lost* (1670), he published his *History of England*, comprising the whole fable of Geoffrey of Monmouth, and continued to the Norman invasion. Why he should have given the first part, which he seems not to believe, and which is universally rejected, it is difficult to conjecture. The style is harsh; but it has something of rough vigour, which perhaps may often strike, though it cannot please.

On

On this history the licenser again fixed his claws, and before he would transmit it to the press tore out several parts. Some censures of the Saxon monks were taken away, lest they should be applied to the modern clergy; and a character of the Long Parliament, and Assembly of Divines, was excluded; of which the author gave a copy to the earl of Anglesea, and which, being afterwards published, has been since inserted in its proper place.

The same year were printed *Paradise Regained*, and *Sampson Agonistes*, a tragedy written in imitation of the ancients, and never designed by the author for the stage. These poems were published by another bookseller. It has
been

been asked, whether Simmons was discouraged from receiving them by the slow sale of the former? Why a writer changed his bookseller a hundred years ago, I am far from hoping to discover. It is certain, that he who in two years sells thirteen hundred copies of a volume in quarto, bought for two payments of five pounds each, has no reason to repent his purchase.

When Milton shewed *Paradise Regained* to Elwood, "This," said he, "is owing to you; for you put it in my head by the question you put to me at Chalfont, which otherwise I had not thought of."

His last poetical offspring was his favourite. He could not, as Elwood relates,

lates, endure to hear *Paradise Lost* preferred to *Paradise Regained*. Many causes may vitiate a writer's judgement of his own works. On that which has cost him much labour he sets a high value, because he is unwilling to think that he has been diligent in vain ; what has been produced without toilsome efforts is considered with delight, as a proof of vigorous faculties and fertile invention ; and the last work, whatever it be, has necessarily most of the grace of novelty. Milton, however it happened, had this prejudice, and had it to himself.

To that multiplicity of attainments, and extent of comprehension, that entitle this great author to our veneration, may be added a kind of humble dignity,

nity, which did not disdain the meanest services to literature. The epick poet, the controvertist, the politician, having already descended to accommodate children with a book of rudiments, now, in the last years of his life, composed a book of Logick, for the initiation of students in philosophy; and published (1672) *Artis Logicæ plenior Institutio ad Petri Rami methodum concinnata*: that is, “A new Scheme of Logick, according “to the Method of Ramus.” I know not whether, even in this book, he did not intend an act of hostility against the Universities; for Ramus was one of the first oppugners of the old philosophy, who disturbed with innovations the quiet of the schools.

His

His polemical disposition again revived. He had now been safe so long, that he forgot his fears, and published a *Treatise of true Religion, Heresy, Schism, Toleration, and the best Means to prevent the Growth of Popery*.

But this little tract is modestly written, with respectful mention of the church of England, and an appeal to the thirty-nine articles. His principle of toleration is, agreement in the sufficiency of the Scriptures; and he extends it to all who, whatever their opinions are, profess to derive them from the sacred books. The papists appeal to other testimonies, and are therefore in his opinion not to be permitted the liberty of either publick or private worship; for
though

though they plead conscience, *we have no warrant, he says, to regard conscience which is not grounded in Scripture.*

Those who are not convinced by his reasons, may be perhaps delighted with his wit. The term *Roman catholick* is, he says, *one of the Pope's bulls; it is partiëular universal, or catholick schismatick.*

He has, however, something better. As the best preservative against Popery, he recommends the diligent perusal of the Scriptures; a duty, from which he warns the busy part of mankind not to think themselves excused.

He now reprinted his juvenile poems, with some additions.

In the last year of his life he sent to the press, seeming to take delight in publication, a collection of Familiar Epistles in Latin; to which, being too few to make a volume, he added some academical exercises, which perhaps he perused with pleasure, as they recalled to his memory the days of youth; but for which nothing but veneration for his name could now procure a reader,

When he had attained his sixty-sixth year, the gout, with which he had been long tormented, prevailed over the enfeebled powers of nature. He died by a quiet and silent expiration, about the tenth of November 1674, at his house in Bunhill-fields; and was buried next his father in the chancel of St. Giles

at

at Cripplegate. His funeral was very splendidly and numerously attended.

Upon his grave there is supposed to have been no memorial; but in our time a monument has been erected in Westminster Abbey *To the Author of Paradise Lost*, by Mr. Benson, who has in the inscription bestowed more words upon himself than upon Milton.

When the inscription for the monument of Philips, in which he was said to be *soli Miltono secundus*, was exhibited to Dr. Sprat, then dean of Westminster, he refused to admit it; the name of Milton was, in his opinion, too detestable to be read on the wall of a building dedicated to devotion. Atterbury, who succeeded him, being au-

thor of the inscription, permitted its reception. "And such has been the
 "change of publick opinion," said Dr.
 Gregory, from whom I heard this account, "that I have seen erected in the
 "church a statue of that man, whose
 "name I once knew considered as a pollution of its walls."

Milton has the reputation of having been in his youth eminently beautiful, so as to have been called the Lady of his college. His hair, which was of a light brown, parted at the foretop, and hung down upon his shoulders, according to the picture which he has given of Adam. He was, however, not of the heroick stature, but rather below the middle size, according to Mr. Richardson,

son,

son, who mentions him as having narrowly escaped from being *short and thick*. He was vigorous and active, and delighted in the exercise of the sword, in which he is related to have been eminently skilful. His weapon was, I believe, not the rapier, but the back-sword, of which he recommends the use in his book on Education.

His eyes are said never to have been bright; but, if he was a dexterous fencer, they must have been once quick.

His domestick habits, so far as they are known, were those of a severe student. He drank little strong drink of any kind, and fed without delicacy of choice or excess in quantity. In his youth he studied late at night; but af-

terwards changed his hours, and rested in bed from nine to four in the Summer, and five in Winter. The course of his day was best known after he was blind. When he first rose he heard a chapter in the Hebrew Bible, and then studied till twelve; then took some exercise for an hour; then dined; then plaid on the organ, and sung, or heard another sing; then studied to six; then entertained his visitors, till eight; then supped, and, after a pipe of tobacco and a glass of water, went to bed.

So is his life described; but this even tenour appears attainable only in Colleges. He that lives in the world will sometimes have the succession of his practice broken and confused. Visitors,
of

of whom Milton is represented to have had great numbers, will come and stay unseasonably; business, of which every man has some, must be done when others will do it.

When he did not care to rise early, he had something read to him by his bedside; perhaps at this time his daughters were employed. He composed much in the morning, and dictated in the day, sitting obliquely in an elbow-chair, with his leg thrown over the arm.

Fortune appears not to have had much of his care. In the civil wars he lent his personal estate to the parliament; but when, after the contest was decided, he solicited repayment, he met

not only with neglect, but *sharp rebuke*; and, having tired both himself and his friends, was given up to poverty and hopeless indignation, till he shewed how able he was to do greater service. He was then made Latin secretary, with two hundred pounds a year; and had a thousand pounds for his *Defence of the People*. His widow, who, after his death, retired to Nantwich in Cheshire, and died about 1729, is said to have reported that he lost two thousand pounds by entrusting it to a scrivener; and that, in the general depredation upon the Church, he had grasped an estate of about sixty pounds a year belonging to Westminster Abbey, which, like other estates of the plunder of rebellion, he

was

was afterwards obliged to return. Two thousand pounds; which he had placed in the Excise-office, were also lost. There is yet no reason to believe that he was ever reduced to indigence. His wants being few, were competently supplied. He sold his library before his death, and left his family fifteen hundred pounds, on which his widow laid hold, and only gave one hundred to each of his daughters.

His literature was unquestionably great. He read all the languages which are considered either as learned or polite; Hebrew, with its two dialects, Greek, Latin, Italian, French, and Spanish. In Latin his skill was such as places him in the first rank of writers and critics; and

and he appears to have cultivated Italian with uncommon diligence. The books in which his daughter, who used to read to him, represented him as most delighting, after Homer, which he could almost repeat, were Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Euripides. His Euripides is, by Mr. Cradock's kindness, now in my hands : the margin is sometimes noted ; but I have found nothing remarkable.

Of the English poets he set most value upon Spenser, Shakespeare, and Cowley. Spenser was apparently his favourite : Shakespeare he may easily be supposed to like, with every other skilful reader ; but I should not have expected that Cowley, whose ideas of excellence

cellence were so different from his own, would have had much of his approbation. His character of Dryden, who sometimes visited him, was, that he was a good rhymist, but no poet.

His theological opinions are said to have been first calvinistical; and afterwards, perhaps when he began to hate the Presbyterians, to have tended towards Arminianism. In the mixed questions of theology and government, he never thinks that he can recede far enough from popery, or prelacy; but what Baudius says of Erasmus seems applicable to him, *magis habuit quod fugeret, quam quod sequeretur*. He had determined rather what to condemn than what to approve. He has not associated himself

with

with any denomination of Protestants : we know rather what he was not, than what he was. He was not of the church of Rome ; he was not of the church of England.

To be of no church is dangerous. Religion, of which the rewards are distant, and which is animated only by Faith and Hope, will glide by degrees out of the mind, unless it be invigorated and reimpresed by external ordinances, by stated calls to worship, and the salutary influence of example. Milton, who appears to have had full conviction of the truth of Christianity, and to have regarded the Holy Scriptures with the profoundest veneration, to have been untainted by any heretical peculiarity

liarity of opinion, and to have lived in a confirmed belief of the immediate and occasional agency of Providence; yet grew old without any visible worship. In the distribution of his hours, there was no hour of prayer, either solitary, or with his household; omitting publick prayers, he omitted all.

Of this omission the reason has been sought, upon a supposition which ought never to be made, that men live with their own approbation, and justify their conduct to themselves. Prayer certainly was not thought superfluous by him, who represents our first parents as praying acceptably in the state of innocence, and effiactly after their fall. That he lived without prayer can hardly be affirmed;

firmed; his studies and meditations were an habitual prayer. The neglect of it in his family was probably a fault for which he condemned himself, and which he intended to correct, but that death, as too often happens, intercepted his reformation.

His political notions were those of an acrimonious and furly republican, for which it is not known that he gave any better reason than that *a popular government was the most frugal; for the trappings of a monarchy would set up an ordinary commonwealth.* It is surely very shallow policy, that supposes money to be the chief good; and even this, without considering that the support and expence of a Court is, for the most part,

part, only a particular kind of trafficking by which money is circulated, without any national impoverishment.

Milton's republicanism was, I am afraid, founded in an envious hatred of greatness, and a sullen desire of independence; in petulance, impatient of controul, and pride disdainful of superiority. He hated monarchs in the state, and prelates in the church; for he hated all whom he was required to obey. It is to be suspected that his predominant desire was to destroy rather than establish, and that he felt not so much the love of liberty as repugnance to authority.

It has been observed, that they who most loudly clamour for liberty do not
most

most liberally grant it. What we know of Milton's character, in domestick relations, is, that he was severe and arbitrary. His family consisted of women; and there appears in his books something like a Turkish contempt of females, as subordinate and inferiour beings. That his own daughters might not break the ranks, he suffered them to be depressed by a mean and penurious education. He thought woman made only for obedience, and man only for rebellion.

Of his family some account may be expected. His sister, first married to Mr. Philips, afterwards married Mr. Agar, a friend of her first husband, who succeeded him in the Crown-office. She had

had by her first husband Edward and John, the two nephews whom Milton educated; and by her second, two daughters.

His brother, Sir Christopher, had two daughters, Mary and Catherine, and a son Thomas, who succeeded Agar in the Crown-office, and left a daughter, living in 1749 in Grosvenor-street.

Milton had children only by his first wife; Anne, Mary, and Deborah. Anne, though deformed, married a master-builder, and died of her first child. Mary died single. Deborah married Abraham Clark, a weaver in Spital-fields, and lived 76 years, to August 1727. This is the daughter of whom publick mention has been made. She

could repeat the first lines of Homer, the Metamorphoses, and some of Euripides, by having often read them. Yet here incredulity is ready to make a stand. Many repetitions are necessary to fix in the memory lines not understood; and why should Milton wish or want to hear them so often! These lines were at the beginning of the poems. Of a book written in a language not understood, the beginning raises no more attention than the end; and as those that understand it know commonly the beginning best, its rehearsal will seldom be necessary. It is not likely that Milton required any passage to be so much repeated as that his daughter could learn it; nor likely that he desired the initial lines to be read
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at all; nor that the daughter, weary of the drudgery of pronouncing unideal sounds, would voluntarily commit them to memory.

To this gentlewoman Addison made a present, and promised some establishment; but died soon after. Queen Caroline sent her fifty guineas. She had seven sons and three daughters; but none of them had any children, except her son Caleb and her daughter Elizabeth. Caleb went to Fort St. George in the East Indies, and had two sons, of whom nothing is now known. Elizabeth married Thomas Foster, a weaver in Spital-fields, and had seven children, who all died. She kept a petty grocer's or chandler's shop, first at Halloway,

and afterwards in Cock-lane near Shore-ditch Church. She knew little of her grandfather, and that little was not good. She told of his harshness to his daughters, and his refusal to have them taught to write; and, in opposition to other accounts, represented him as delicate, though temperate, in his diet.

In 1750, April 5, *Comus* was played for her benefit. She had so little acquaintance with diversion or gaiety, that she did not know what was intended when a benefit was offered her. The profits of the night were only one hundred and thirty pounds, though Dr. Newton brought a large contribution; and twenty pounds were given by Tonsen, a man who is to be praised as often

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as he is named. Of this sum one hundred pounds was placed in the stocks, after some debate between her and her husband in whose name it should be entered, and the rest augmented their little stock, with which they removed to Islington. This was the greatest benefaction that *Paradise Lost* ever procured the author's descendents; and to this he who has now attempted to relate his Life, had the honour of contributing a Prologue.





IN the examination of Milton's poetical works, I shall pay so much regard to time as to begin with his juvenile productions. For his early pieces he seems to have had a degree of fondness not very laudable: what he has once written he resolves to preserve, and gives to the publick an unfinished poem, which he broke off because he was *nothing satisfied with what he had done*, supposing his readers less nice than himself. These preludes to his future labours are in Italian, Latin, and English. Of the Italian I cannot pretend to speak as a critic; but I have heard
them

them commended by a man well qualified to decide their merit. The Latin pieces are lusciously elegant; but the delight which they afford is rather by the exquisite imitation of the ancient writers, by the purity of the diction, and the harmony of the numbers, than by any power of invention, or vigour of sentiment. They are not all of equal value; the elegies excell the odes; and some of the exercises on Gunpowder Treason might have been spared.

The English poems, though they make no promises of *Paradise Lost*, have this evidence of genius, that they have a cast original and unborrowed. But their peculiarity is not excellence: if they differ from the verses of others,

they differ for the worse; for they are too often distinguished by repulsive harshness; the combinations of words are new, but they are not pleasing; the rhymes and epithets seem to be laboriously fought, and violently applied.

That in the early part of his life he wrote with much care appears from his manuscripts, happily preserved at Cambridge, in which many of his smaller works are found as they were first written, with the subsequent corrections. Such reliques shew how excellence is acquired; what we hope ever to do with ease, we may learn first to do with diligence.

Those who admire the beauties of this great poet, sometimes force their
own

own judgement into false approbation of his little pieces, and prevail upon themselves to think that admirable which is only singular. All that short compositions can commonly attain is neatness and elegance. Milton never learned the art of doing little things with grace; he overlooked the milder excellence of suavity and softness; he was a *Lion* that had no skill *in dandling the Kid*.

One of the poems on which much praise has been bestowed is *Lycidas*; of which the diction is harsh, the rhymes uncertain, and the numbers unpleasing. What beauty there is, we must therefore seek in the sentiments and images.

It is not to be considered as the effusion

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of

of real passion; for passion runs not after remote allusions and obscure opinions. Passion plucks no berries from the myrtle and ivy, nor calls upon Arethuse and Mincius, nor tells of rough *satyrs* and *fauns with cloven heel*. Where there is leisure for fiction there is little grief.

In this poem there is no nature, for there is no truth; there is no art, for there is nothing new. Its form is that of a pastoral, easy, vulgar, and therefore disgusting: whatever images it can supply, are long ago exhausted; and its inherent improbability always forces dissatisfaction on the mind. When Cowley tells of Hervey that they studied together, it is easy to suppose how much
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he must miss the companion of his labours, and the partner of his discoveries ; but what image of tenderness can be excited by these lines ?

We drove a field, and both together
heard

What time the grey fly winds her sultry horn,

Batt'ning our flocks with the fresh
dews of night.

We know that they never drove a field, and that they had no flocks to batten ; and though it be allowed that the representation may be allegorical, the true meaning is so uncertain and remote, that it is never sought, because it cannot be known when it is found.

Among

Among the flocks, and copfes, and flowers, appear the heathen deities; Jove and Phœbus, Neptune and Æolus, with a long train of mythological imagery, fuch as a College eafily fupplies. Nothing can lefs difplay knowledge, or lefs exercife invention, than to tell how a fhepherd has loft his companion, and muft now feed his flocks alone, without any judge of his fkill in piping; and how one god asks another god what is become of Lycidas, and how neither god can tell. He who thus grieves will excite no fympathy; he who thus praifes will confer no honour.

This poem has yet a groffer fault. With thefe trifling fictions are mingled the moft awful and facred truths, fuch

as

as ought never to be polluted with such irreverend combinations. The shepherd likewise is now a feeder of sheep, and afterwards an ecclesiastical pastor, a superintendent of a Christian flock. Such equivocations are always unskilful, but here they are indecent, and at least approach to impiety, of which, however, I believe the writer not to have been conscious.

Such is the power of reputation justly acquired, that its blaze drives away the eye from nice examination. Surely no man could have fancied that he read *Lycidas* with pleasure, had he not known its author.

Of the two pieces, *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, I believe opinion is uniform;

form; every man that reads them, reads them with pleasure. The author's design is not, what Theobald has remarked, merely to shew how objects derive their colours from the mind, by representing the operation of the same things upon the gay and the melancholy temper, or upon the same man as he is differently disposed; but rather how, among the successive variety of appearances, every disposition of mind takes hold on those by which it may be gratified.

The *cheerful* man hears the lark in the morning; the *pensive* man hears the nightingale in the evening. The *cheerful* man sees the cock strut, and hears the horn and hounds echo in the wood; then walks *not unseen* to observe the
glory

glory of the rising sun, or listen to the singing milk-maid, and view the labours of the plowman and the mower; then casts his eyes about him over scenes of smiling plenty, and looks up to the distant tower, the residence of some fair inhabitant; thus he pursues rural gaiety through a day of labour or of play, and delights himself at night with the fanciful narratives of superstitious ignorance.

The *pensive* man, at one time, walks *unseen* to muse at midnight; and at another hears the sullen curfew. If the weather drives him home, he sits in a room lighted only by *glowing embers*; or by a lonely lamp outwatches the North Star, to discover the habitation of separate souls, and

and varies the shades of meditation, by contemplating the magnificent or pathetic scenes of tragick and epic poetry. When the morning comes, a morning gloomy with rain and wind, he walks into the dark trackless woods, falls asleep by some murmuring water, and with melancholy enthusiasm expects some dream of prognostication, or some musick plaid by aerial performers.

Both Mirth and Melancholy are solitary, silent inhabitants of the breast that neither receive nor transmit communication; no mention is therefore made of a philosophical friend, or a pleasant companion. Seriousness does not arise from any participation of calamity,

harmity, nor gaiety from the pleasures of the bottle.

The man of *chearfulness*, having exhausted the country, tries what *towered cities* will afford, and mingles with scenes of splendor, gay assemblies, and nuptial festivities; but he mingles a mere spectator, as when the learned comedies of Jonson, or the wild dramas of Shakespeare, are exhibited, he attends the theatre.

The *pensive* man never loses himself in crowds, but walks the cloister, or frequents the cathedral. Milton probably had not yet forsaken the Church.

Both his characters delight in musick; but he seems to think that chearful notes would have obtained from Pluto a

complete dismissal of Eurydice, of whom solemn sounds only procured a conditional release.

For the old age of Chearfulness he makes no provision; but Melancholy he conducts with great dignity to the close of life.

Through these two poems the images are properly selected, and nicely distinguished; but the colours of the diction seem not sufficiently discriminated. His Chearfulness is without levity, and his Pensiveness without asperity. I know not whether the characters are kept sufficiently apart. No mirth can, indeed, be found in his melancholy; but I am afraid that I always meet some melancholy

lancholy in his mirth. They are two noble efforts of imagination.

The greatest of his juvenile performances is the *Mask of Comus*; in which may very plainly be discovered the dawn or twilight of *Paradise Lost*. Milton appears to have formed very early that system of diction, and mode of verse, which his maturer judgement approved, and from which he never endeavoured nor desired to deviate.

Nor does *Comus* afford only a specimen of his language; it exhibits likewise his power of description, and his vigour of sentiment, employed in the praise and defence of virtue. A work more truly poetical is rarely found; allusions, images, and descriptive epi-

thets, embellish almost every period with lavish decoration. As a series of lines, therefore, it may be considered as worthy of all the admiration with which the votaries have received it.

As a drama it is deficient. The action is not probable. A Masque, in those parts where supernatural intervention is admitted, must indeed be given up to all the freaks of imagination; but, so far as the action is merely human, it ought to be reasonable, which can hardly be said of the conduct of the two brothers; who, when their sister sinks with fatigue in a pathless wilderness, wander both away together in search of berries too far to find their way back, and leave a helpless lady to all the sadness

and danger of solitude. This however is a defect over-balanced by its convenience.

What deserves more reprehension is, that the prologue spoken in the wild wood by the attendant Spirit is addressed to the audience; a mode of communication so contrary to the nature of dramatick representation, that no precedents can support it.

The discourse of the Spirit is too long; an objection that may be made to almost all the following speeches: they have not the spriteliness of a dialogue animated by reciprocal contention, but seem rather declamations deliberately composed, and formally repeated, on a moral question. The au-

ditor therefore listens as to a lecture, without passion, without anxiety.

The song of Comus has airiness and jollity ; but, what may recommend Milton's morals as well as his poetry, the invitations to pleasure are so general, that they excite no distinct images of corrupt enjoyment, and take no dangerous hold on the fancy.

The following soliloquies of Comus and the Lady are elegant, but tedious. The song must owe much to the voice, if it ever can delight. At last the brothers enter, with too much tranquillity ; and when they have feared lest their sister should be in danger, and hoped that she is not in danger, the Elder makes a speech in praise of chastity,

and the Younger finds how fine it is to be a philosopher.

Then descends the Spirit in form of a shepherd; and the brother, instead of being in haste to ask his help, praises his singing, and enquires his business in that place. It is remarkable, that at this interview the brother is taken with a short fit of rhyming. The Spirit relates that the Lady is in the power of Comus; the brother moralises again; and the Spirit makes a long narration, of no use because it is false, and therefore unsuitable to a good Being.

In all these parts the language is poetical, and the sentiments are generous; but there is something wanting to allure attention.

The dispute between the Lady and Comus is the most animated and affecting scene of the drama, and wants nothing but a brisker reciprocation of objections and replies to invite attention, and detain it.

The songs are vigorous, and full of imagery; but they are harsh in their diction, and not very musical in their numbers.

Throughout the whole, the figures are too bold, and the language too luxuriant for dialogue. It is a drama in the epic stile, inelegantly splendid, and tediously instructive.

The *Sonnets* were written in different parts of Milton's life, upon different occasions. They deserve not any particular

lar criticism ; for of the best it can only be said, that they are not bad ; and perhaps only the eighth and the twenty-first are truly entitled to this slender commendation. The fabrick of a sonnet, however adapted to the Italian language, has never succeeded in ours, which, having greater variety of termination, requires the rhymes to be often changed.

Those little pieces may be dispatched without much anxiety ; a greater work calls for greater care. I am now to examine *Paradise Lost* ; a poem, which, considered with respect to design, may claim the first place, and with respect to performance the second among

among the productions of the human mind.

By the general consent of criticks, the first praise of genius is due to the writer of an epick poem, as it requires an assemblage of all the powers which are singly sufficient for other compositions. Poetry is the art of uniting pleasure with truth, by calling imagination to the help of reason. Epick poetry undertakes to teach the most important truths by the most pleasing precepts, and therefore relates some great event in the most affecting manner. History must supply the writer with the rudiments of narration, which he must improve and exalt by a nobler art, animate by dramattick energy, and diversify

ffy by retrospection and anticipation; morality must teach him the exact bounds, and different shades, of vice and virtue: from policy, and the practice of life, he has to learn the discriminations of character, and the tendency of the passions, either single or combined; and physiology must supply him with illustrations and images. To put these materials to poetical use, is required an imagination capable of painting nature, and realizing fiction. Nor is he yet a poet till he has attained the whole extension of his language, distinguished all the delicacies of phrase, and all the colours of words, and learned to adjust their different sounds to all the varieties of metrical modulation.

Bosſu is of opinion that the poet's firſt work is to find a *moral*, which his fable is afterwards to illuſtrate and eſtabliſh. This ſeems to have been the proceſs only of Milton; the moral of other poems is incidental and conſequent; in Milton's only it is eſſential and intrinsic. His purpoſe was the moſt uſeful and the moſt arduous; *to vindicate the ways of God to man*; to ſhew the reaſonableneſs of religion, and the neceſſity of obedience to the Divine Law.

To convey this moral there muſt be a *fable*, a narration artfully conſtructed, ſo as to excite curioſity, and ſurpriſe expectation. In this part of his work, Milton muſt be confeſſed to have equalled every other poet. He has in-

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volved in his account of the Fall of Man the events which preceded, and those that were to follow it : he has interwoven the whole system of theology with such propriety, that every part appears to be necessary ; and scarcely any recital is wished shorter for the sake of quickening the progress of the main action.

The subject of an epick poem is naturally an event of great importance. That of Milton is not the destruction of a city, the conduct of a colony, or the foundation of an empire. His subject is the fate of worlds, the revolutions of heaven and of earth ; rebellion against the Supreme King, raised by the highest order of created beings ; the overthrow of their host, and the punishment

ment of their crime; the creation of a new race of reasonable creatures; their original happiness and innocence, their forfeiture of immortality, and their restoration to hope and peace.

Great events can be hastened or retarded only by persons of elevated dignity. Before the greatness displayed in Milton's poem, all other greatness shrinks away. The weakest of his agents are the highest and noblest of human beings, the original parents of mankind; with whose actions the elements consented; on whose rectitude, or deviation of will, depended the state of terrestrial nature, and the condition of all the future inhabitants of the globe.

Of

Of the other agents in the poem,
the chief are such as it is irreverence
to name on slight occasions. The rest
were lower powers;

—of which the least could wield
Those elements, and arm him with the
force
Of all their regions.

powers, which only the controul of
Omnipotence restrains from laying crea-
tion waste, and filling the vast expanse
of space with ruin and confusion. To
display the motives and actions of beings
thus superiour, so far as human reason
can examine them, or human imagina-
tion represent them, is the task which
this mighty poet has undertaken and
performed.

In

In the examination of epick poems much speculation is commonly employed upon the *characters*. The characters in the *Paradise Lost*, which admit of examination, are those of angels and of man; of angels good and evil; of man in his innocent and sinful state.

Among the angels, the virtue of Raphael is mild and placid, of easy condescension and free communication; that of Michael is regal and lofty, and, as may seem, attentive to the dignity of his own nature. Abdiel and Gabriel appear occasionally, and act as every incident requires; the solitary fidelity of Abdiel is very amiably painted.

Of the evil angels the characters are more diversified. To Satan, as Addison

son observes, such sentiments are given as suit *the most exalted and most depraved being*. Milton has been censured, by Clark, for the impiety which sometimes breaks from Satan's mouth. For there are thoughts, as he justly remarks, which no observation of character can justify, because no good man would willingly permit them to pass, however transiently, through his own mind. To make Satan speak as a rebel, without any such expressions as might taint the reader's imagination, was indeed one of the great difficulties in Milton's undertaking, and I cannot but think that he has extricated himself with great happiness. There is in Satan's speeches little that can give pain to a pious ear. The lan-

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guage of rebellion cannot be the same with that of obedience. The malignity of Satan foams in haughtiness and obstinacy; but his expressions are commonly general, and no otherwise offensive than as they are wicked.

The other chiefs of the celestial rebellion are very judiciously discriminated in the first and second books; and the ferocious character of Moloch appears, both in the battle and the council, with exact consistency.

To Adam and to Eve are given, during their innocence, such sentiments as innocence can generate and utter. Their love is pure benevolence and mutual veneration; their repasts are without luxury, and their diligence without toil.

1011. Their addressees to their Maker have little more than the voice of admiration and gratitude. Fruition left them nothing to ask, and Innocence left them nothing to fear.

But with guilt enter distrust and discord, mutual accusation, and stubborn self-defence; they regard each other with alienated minds, and dread their Creator as the avenger of their transgression. At last they seek shelter in his mercy, soften to repentance, and melt in supplication. Both before and after the Fall, the superiority of Adam is diligently sustained.

Of the *probable* and the *marvellous*, two parts of a vulgar epick poem, which immerge the critick in deep considera-

tion, the *Paradise Lost* requires little to be said. It contains the history of a miracle, of Creation and Redemption; it displays the power and the mercy of the Supreme Being; the probable therefore is marvellous, and the marvellous is probable. The substance of the narrative is truth; and as truth allows no choice, it is, like necessity, superior to rule. To the accidental or adventitious parts, as to every thing human, some slight exceptions may be made. But the main fabrick is immovably supported,

It is justly remarked by Addison, that this poem has, by the nature of its subject, the advantage above all others, that it is universally and perpetually interesting.

interesting. All mankind will, through all ages, bear the same relation to Adam and to Eve, and must partake of that good and evil which extend to themselves.

Of the *machinery*, so called from $\Theta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma \alpha\pi\omicron \mu\eta\chi\alpha\upsilon\eta\varsigma$, by which is meant the occasional interposition of supernatural power, another fertile topick of critical remarks, here is no room to speak, because every thing is done under the immediate and visible direction of Heaven; but the rule is so far observed, that no part of the action could have been accomplished by any other means.

Of *episodes*, I think there are only two, contained in Raphael's relation of the war in heaven, and Michael's pro-

phetic account of the changes to happen in this world. Both are closely connected with the great action; one was necessary to Adam as a warning, the other as a consolation.

To the compleatness or *integrity* of the design nothing can be objected; it has distinctly and clearly what Aristotle requires, a beginning, a middle, and an end. There is perhaps no poem, of the same length, from which so little can be taken without apparent mutilation. Here are no funeral games, nor is there any long description of a shield. The short digressions at the beginning of the third, seventh, and ninth books, might doubtless be spared; but superfluities so beautiful, who would take away?

away? or who does not wish that the author of the *Iliad* had gratified succeeding ages with a little knowledge of himself? Perhaps no passages are more frequently or more attentively read than those extrinſick paragraphs; and, ſince the end of poetry is pleaſure, that cannot be unpoetical with which all are pleaſed.

The questions, whether the action of the poem be ſtrictly *one*, whether the poem can be properly termed *heroick*, and who is the hero, are raiſed by ſuch readers as draw their principles of judgement rather from books than from reaſon. Milton, though he intitled *Paradiſe Loſt* only a *poem*, yet calls it himſelf *heroick ſong*. Dryden, petu-

lantly and indecently; denies the heroism of Adam, because he was overcome; but there is no reason why the hero should not be unfortunate, except established practice, since success and virtue do not go necessarily together. Cato is the hero of Lucan; but Lucan's authority will not be suffered by Quintilian to decide. However, if success be necessary, Adam's deceiver was at last crushed; Adam was restored to his Maker's favour, and therefore may securely resume his human rank.

After the scheme and fabrick of the poem, must be considered its component parts, the sentiments and the diction.

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The *sentiments*, as expressive of manners, or appropriated to characters, are, for the greater part, unexceptionably just.

Splendid passages, containing lessons of morality, or precepts of prudence, occur seldom. Such is the original formation of this poem, that, as it admits no human manners till the Fall, it can give little assistance to human conduct. Its end is to raise the thoughts above sublunary cares or pleasures. Yet the praise of that fortitude, with which Abdiel maintained his singularity of virtue against the scorn of multitudes, may be accommodated to all times; and Raphael's reproof of Adam's curiosity after the planetary motions, with

with the answer returned by Adam, may be confidently opposed to any rule of life which any poet has delivered.

The thoughts which are occasionally called forth in the progress, are such as could only be produced by an imagination in the highest degree fervid and active, to which materials were supplied by incessant study and unlimited curiosity. The heat of Milton's mind might be said to sublimate his learning, to throw off into his work the spirit of science, unmingled with its grosser parts.

He had considered creation in its whole extent, and his descriptions are therefore learned. He had accustomed his imagination to unrestrained indulgence, and

and his conceptions therefore were extensive. The characteristick quality of his poem is sublimity. He sometimes descends to the elegant, but his element is the great. He can occasionally invest himself with grace; but his natural port is gigantick loftiness*. He can please when pleasure is required; but it is his peculiar power to astonish.

He seems to have been well acquainted with his own genius, and to know what it was that Nature had bestowed upon him more bountifully than upon others; the power of displaying the vast, illuminating the splendid, en-

* Algarotti terms it *gigantesca sublimità*. *Miltoniana*.

forcing

forcing the awful, darkening the gloomy, and aggravating the dreadful : he therefore chose a subject on which too much could not be said, on which he might tire his fancy without the censure of extravagance.

The appearances of nature, and the occurrences of life, did not satiate his appetite of greatness. To paint things as they are, requires a minute attention, and employs the memory rather than the fancy. Milton's delight was to sport in the wide regions of possibility ; reality was a scene too narrow for his mind. He sent his faculties out upon discovery, into worlds where only imagination can travel, and delighted to form new modes of existence, and furnish sentiment and action

action to superior beings, to trace the counsels of hell, or accompany the choirs of heaven.

But he could not be always in other worlds: he must sometimes revisit earth, and tell of things visible and known. When he cannot raise wonder by the sublimity of his mind, he gives delight by its fertility.

Whatever be his subject, he never fails to fill the imagination. But his images and descriptions of the scenes or operations of Nature do not seem to be always copied from original form, nor to have the freshness, raciness, and energy of immediate observation. He saw Nature, as Dryden expresses it, *through the spectacles of books*; and on
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most occasions calls learning to his assistance. The garden of Eden brings to his mind the vale of *Enna*, where *Proserpine* was gathering flowers. *Sagan* makes his way through fighting elements, like *Argo* between the *Cyanean* rocks; or *Ulysses* between the two *Sicilian* whirlpools; when he thunned *Charybdis* on the larboard. The mythological allusions have been justly censured, as not being always used with notice of their vanity; but they contribute variety to the narration, and produce an alternate exercise of the memory and the fancy.

His families are less numerous, and more various, than those of his predecessors. But he does not confine himself

M I L T O N.

self within the limits of rigorous comparison : his great excellence is amplitude, and he expands the adventitious image beyond the dimensions which the occasion required. Thus, comparing the shield of Satan to the orb of the Moon, he crowds the imagination with the discovery of the telescope, and all the wonders which the telescope discovers.

Of his moral sentiments it is hardly praise to affirm that they excel those of all other poets ; for this superiority he was indebted to his acquaintance with the sacred writings. The ancient epick poets, wanting the light of Revelation, were very unskilful teachers of virtue ; their principal characters may be great, but

but they are not amiable. The reader may rise from their works with a greater degree of active or passive fortitude, and sometimes of prudence ; but he will be able to carry away few precepts of justice, and none of mercy.

From the Italian writers it appears, that the advantages of even Christian knowledge may be possessed in vain. Ariosto's pravity is generally known ; and though the *Deliverance of Jerusalem* may be considered as a sacred subject, the poet has been very sparing of moral instruction.

In Milton every line breathes sanctity of thought, and purity of manners, except when the train of the narration requires the introduction of the rebellious spirits ;

spirits; and even they are compelled to acknowledge their subjection to God, in such a manner as excites reverence and confirms piety.

Of human beings there are but two; but those two are the parents of mankind, venerable before their fall for dignity and innocence, and amiable after it for repentance and submission. In their first state their affection is tender without weakness, and their piety sublime without presumption. When they have sinned, they shew how discord begins in natural frailty, and how it ought to cease in mutual forbearance; how confidence of the divine favour is forfeited by sin, and how hope of pardon may be obtained by penitence and

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prayer.

prayer. A state of innocence we can only conceive, if indeed, in our present misery, it be possible to conceive it; but the sentiments and worship proper to a fallen and offending being, we have all to learn, as we have all to practise.

The poet, whatever be done, is always great. Our progenitors, in their first state, conversed with angels; even when folly and sin had degraded them, they had not in their humiliation *the port of mean suitors*; and they rise again to reverential regard, when we find that their prayers were heard.

As human passions did not enter the world before the Fall, there is in the *Paradise Lost* little opportunity for the pathetick; but what little there is has
not

not been lost. That passion which is peculiar to rational nature, the anguish arising from the consciousness of transgression, and the horrors attending the sense of the Divine displeasure, are very justly described and forcibly impressed. But the passions are moved only on one occasion; sublimity is the general and prevailing quality in this poem; sublimity variously modified, sometimes descriptive, sometimes argumentative.

The defects and faults of *Paradise Lost*, for faults and defects every work of man must have, it is the business of impartial criticism to discover.

As, in displaying the excellence of Milton, I have not made long quotations, because of selecting beauties there had

been no end, I shall in the same general manner mention that which seems to deserve censure; for what Englishman can take delight in transcribing passages, which, if they lessen the reputation of Milton, diminish in some degree the honour of our country?

The generality of my scheme does not admit the frequent notice of verbal inaccuracies; which Bentley, perhaps better skilled in grammar than in poetry, has often found, though he sometimes made them, and which he imputed to the obtrusions of a reviser whom the author's blindness obliged him to employ. A supposition rash and groundless, if he thought it true; and
vile

vile and pernicious, if, as is said, he in private allowed it to be false.

The plan of *Paradise Lost* has this inconvenience, that it comprises neither human actions nor human manners. The man and woman who act and suffer, are in a state which no other man or woman can ever know. The reader finds no transaction in which he can be engaged; beholds no condition in which he can by any effort of imagination place himself; he has, therefore, little natural curiosity or sympathy.

We all, indeed, feel the effects of Adam's disobedience; we all sin like Adam, and like him must all bewail our offences; we have restless and insidious enemies in the fallen angels, and

in the blessed spirits we have guardians and friends; in the Redemption of mankind we hope to be included; and in the description of heaven and hell we are surely interested, as we are all to reside hereafter either in the regions of horror or of bliss.

But these truths are too important to be new; they have been taught to our infancy; they have mingled with our solitary thoughts and familiar conversation, and are habitually interwoven with the whole texture of life. Being therefore not new, they raise no unaccustomed emotion in the mind; what we knew before we cannot learn; what is not unexpected cannot surprise.

Of

Of the ideas suggested by these awful scenes, from some we recede with reverence, except when stated hours require their association; and from others we shrink with horror, or admit them only as salutary inflictions, as counterpoises to our interests and passions. Such images rather obstruct the career of fancy than incite it.

Pleasure and terrour are indeed the genuine sources of poetry; but poetical pleasure must be such as human imagination can at least conceive, and poetical terrour such as human strength and fortitude may combat. The good and evil of Eternity are too ponderous for the wings of wit; the mind sinks under them in passive helplessness, content

with calm belief and humble adoration.

Known truths, however, may take a different appearance, and be conveyed to the mind by a new train of intermediate images. This Milton has undertaken, and performed with pregnancy and vigour of mind peculiar to himself.

Whoever considers the few radical positions which the Scriptures afforded him, will wonder by what energetick operation he expanded them to such extent, and ramified them to so much variety, restrained as he was by religious reverence from licentiousness of fiction.

Here is a full display of the united force of study and genius; of a great accumulation of materials, with judgment

ment to digest, and fancy to combine them: Milton was able to select from nature, or from story, from ancient fable, or from modern science, whatever could illustrate or adorn his thoughts. An accumulation of knowledge impregnated his mind, fermented by study, and sublimed by imagination.

It has been therefore said, without an indecent hyperbole, by one of his encomiasts, that in reading *Paradise Lost* we read a book of universal knowledge.

But original deficiency cannot be supplied. The want of human interest is always felt. *Paradise Lost* is one of the books which the reader admires and lays down, and forgets to take up again. Its perusal

is

is a duty rather than a pleasure. We read Milton for instruction, retire harassed and overburdened, and look elsewhere for recreation; we desert our master, and seek for companions.

Another inconvenience of Milton's design is, that it requires the description of what cannot be described, the agency of spirits. He saw that immateriality supplied no images, and that he could not show angels acting but by instruments of action; he therefore invested them with form and matter. This, being necessary, was therefore defensible; and he should have secured the consistency of his system, by keeping immateriality out of sight, and enticing his reader to drop it from his thoughts. But he has

unhappily perplexed his poetry with his philosophy. His infernal and celestial powers are sometimes pure spirit, and sometimes animated body. When Satan walks with his lance upon the *burning marle*, he has a body ; when in his passage between hell and the new world, he is in danger of sinking in the vacuity, and is supported by a gust of *rising vapours*, he has a body ; when he animates the toad, he seems to be mere spirit, that can penetrate matter at pleasure ; when he *starts up in his own shape*, he has at least a determined form ; and when he is brought before Gabriel, he has *a spear and shield*, which he had the power of hiding in the toad, though the
arms

arms of the contending angels are evidently material.

The vulgar inhabitants of Pandæmonium being *incorporeal spirits*, are *at large, though without number*, in a limited space; yet in the battle, when they were overwhelmed by mountains, their armour hurt them, *crushed in upon their substance, now grown gross by sinning*. This likewise happened to the uncorrupted angels, who were overthrown *the sooner for their arms*, for *unarmed they might easily as spirits have evaded by contraction, or remove*. Even as spirits they are hardly spiritual; for *contraction* and *remove* are images of matter; but if they could have escaped without their armour, they might have

escaped from it, and left only the empty cover to be battered. Uriel, when he rides on a sun-beam, is material : Satan is material when he is afraid of the prowess of Adam.

The confusion of spirit and matter which pervades the whole narration of the war of heaven fills it with incongruity ; and the book, in which it is related, is, I believe, the favourite of children, and gradually neglected as knowledge is increased.

After the operation of immaterial agents, which cannot be explained, may be considered that of allegorical persons, which have no real existence. To exalt causes into agents, to invest abstract ideas with form, and animate them with acti-

activity, has always been the right of poetry. But such airy beings are, for the most part, suffered only to do their natural office; and retire. Thus Fame tells a tale, and Victory hovers over a general, or perches on a standard; but Fame and Victory can do no more. To give them any real employment, or ascribe to them any material agency, is to make them allegorical no longer, but to shock the mind by ascribing effects to non-entity. In the *Prometheus* of *Æschylus*, we see *Violence* and *Strength*, and in the *Alcestis* of *Euripides*, we see *Death* brought upon the stage, all as active persons of the drama; but no precedents can justify absurdity.

Mil.

Milton's allegory of Sin and Death is undoubtedly faulty. Sin is indeed the mother of Death, and may be allowed to be the portress of hell; but when they stop the journey of Satan, a journey described as real, and when Death offers him battle, the allegory is broken. That Sin and Death should have shewn the way to hell might have been allowed; but they cannot facilitate the passage by building a bridge, because the difficulty of Satan's passage is described as real and sensible, and the bridge ought to be only figurative. The hell assigned to the rebellious spirits is described as not less local than the residence of man. It is placed in some distant part of space, separated from the regions of harmony and

and order by a chaotick waste and an unoccupied vacuity ; but *Sin* and *Death* worked up a *mole* of *aggregated soil*, cemented with *asphaltus* ; a work too bulky for ideal architects.

This unskilful allegory appears to me one of the greatest faults of the poem ; and to this there was no temptation, but the author's opinion of its beauty.

To the conduct of the narrative some objections may be made. Satan is with great expectation brought before Gabriel in Paradise, and is suffered to go away unmolested. The creation of man is represented as the consequence of the vacuity left in heaven by the expulsion of the rebels, yet Satan mentions it as a report *rife in heaven* before his departure.

To

To find sentiments for the state of innocence, was very difficult; and something of anticipation perhaps is now and then discovered. Adam's discourse of dreams seems not to be the speculation of a new-created being. I know not whether his answer to the angel's reproof for curiosity does not want something of propriety: it is the speech of a man acquainted with many other men. Some philosophical notions, especially when the philosophy is false, might have been better omitted. The angel, in a comparison, speaks of *timorous deer*, before deer were yet timorous, and before Adam could understand the comparison.

Dryden remarks, that Milton has some flats among his elevations. This is only to say that all the parts are not equal. In every work one part must be for the sake of others; a palace must have passages; a poem must have transitions. It is no more to be required that wit should always be blazing, than that the sun should always stand at noon. In a great work there is a vicissitude of luminous and opaque parts, as there is in the world a succession of day and night. Milton, when he has expatiated in the sky, may be allowed sometimes to revisit earth; for what other author ever soared so high, or sustained his flight so long?

Mil-

Milton, being well versed in the Italian poets, appears to have borrowed often from them; and, as every man learns something from his companions, his desire of imitating Ariosto's levity has disgraced his work with the *Paradise of Fools*; a fiction not in itself ill-imagined, but too ludicrous for its place.

His play on words, in which he delights too often; his equivocations which Bentley endeavours to defend by the example of the ancients; his unnecessary and ungraceful use of terms of art, it is not necessary to mention, because they are easily remarked, and generally censured; and at last bear so little proportion to the whole, that they scarcely deserve the attention of a critick.

Such are the faults of that wonderful performance *Paradise Lost*; which he who can put in balance with its beauties must be considered not as nice but as dull, as less to be censured for want of candour than pitied for want of sensibility.

Of *Paradise Regained*, the general judgement seems now to be right, that it is in many parts elegant, and every-where instructive. It was not to be supposed that the writer of *Paradise Lost* could ever write without great effusions of fancy, and exalted precepts of wisdom. The basis of *Paradise Regained* is narrow; a dialogue without action can never please like an union of the narrative and dramattick powers. Had this
poem

poem been written not by Milton, but by some imitator, it would have claimed and received universal praise,

If *Paradise Regained* has been too much depreciated, *Samson Agonistes* has in requital been too much admired. It could only be by long prejudice, and the bigotry of learning, that Milton could prefer the ancient tragedies, with their encumbrance of a chorus, to the exhibitions of the French and English stages; and it is only by a blind confidence in the reputation of Milton, that a drama can be praised in which the intermediate parts have neither cause nor consequence, neither hasten nor retard the catastrophe.

In this tragedy are however many particular beauties, many just sentiments and striking lines; but it wants that power of attracting the attention which a well-connected plan produces.

Milton would not have excelled in dramattick writing; he knew human nature only in the gross, and had never studied the shades of character, nor the combinations of concurring, or the perplexity of contending passions. He had read much, and knew what books could teach; but had mingled little in the world, and was deficient in the knowledge which experience must confer.

Through all his greater works there prevails an uniform peculiarity of *Diction,*

tion, a mode and cast of expression which bears little resemblance to that of any former writer, and which is so far removed from common use, that an unlearned reader, when he first opens his book, finds himself surprised by a new language.

This novelty has been, by those who can find nothing wrong in Milton, imputed to his laborious endeavours after words suitable to the grandeur of his ideas. *Our language*, says Addison, *sunk under him*. But the truth is, that, both in prose and verse, he had formed his stile by a perverse and pedantick principle. He was desirous to use English words with a foreign idiom. This in all his prose is discovered and condemned; for

there judgement operates freely, neither softened by the beauty nor awed by the dignity of his thoughts; but such is the power of his poetry, that his call is obeyed without resistance, the reader feels himself in captivity to a higher and a nobler mind, and criticism sinks in admiration.

Milton's style was not modified by his subject: what is shown with greater extent in *Paradise Lost*, may be found in *Comus*. One source of his peculiarity was his familiarity with the Tuscan poets: the disposition of his words is, I think, frequently Italian; perhaps sometimes combined with other tongues. Of him, at last, may be said what Jonson says of Spenser, that *he wrote no lan-*

language, but has formed what *Butler* calls a *Babylonish Dialect*, in itself harsh and barbarous; but made by exalted genius, and extensive learning, the vehicle of so much instruction and so much pleasure, that, like other lovers, we find grace in its deformity.

Whatever be the faults of his diction, he cannot want the praise of copiousness and variety: he was master of his language in its full extent; and has selected the melodious words with such diligence, that from his book alone the Art of English Poetry might be learned.

After his diction, something must be said of his *versification*. *The measure*, he says, *is the English herrick verse without rhyme*. Of this mode he had many
exam-

examples among the Italians, and some in his own country. The earl of Surry is said to have translated one of Virgil's books without rhyme; and, besides our tragedies, a few short poems had appeared in blank verse; particularly one tending to reconcile the nation to Raleigh's wild attempt upon Guiana, and probably written by Raleigh himself. These petty performances cannot be supposed to have much influenced Milton, who more probably took his hint from Trifino's *Italia Liberata*; and, finding blank verse easier than rhyme, was desirous of persuading himself that it is better.

Rhyme, he says, and says truly, is no necessary adjunct of true poetry. But perhaps,

haps, of poetry as a mental operation, metre or musick is no necessary adjunct: it is however by the musick of metre that poetry has been discriminated in all languages; and in languages melodiously constructed, by a due proportion of long and short syllables, metre is sufficient. But one language cannot communicate its rules to another: where metre is scanty and imperfect, some help is necessary. The musick of the English heroick line strikes the ear so faintly that it is easily lost, unless all the syllables of every line co-operate together: this co-operation can be only obtained by the preservation of every verse unmingled with another, as a distinct system of sounds; and this distinctness is

ob-

obtained and preserved by the artifice of rhyme. The variety of pauses, so much boasted by the lovers of blank verse, changes the measures of an English poet to the periods of a declaimer; and there are only a few skilful and happy readers of Milton, who enable their audience to perceive where the lines end or begin. *Blank verse*, said an ingenious critick, *seems to be verse only to the eye.*

Poetry may subsist without rhyme, but English poetry will not often please; nor can rhyme ever be safely spared but where the subject is able to support itself. Blank verse makes some approach to that which is called the *lapidary stile*; has neither the easiness of prose, nor the melody of numbers, and therefore

tires

tires by long continuance. Of the Italian writers without rhyme, whom Milton alleges as precedents, not one is popular; what reason could urge in its defence, has been confuted by the ear.

But, whatever be the advantage of rhyme, I cannot prevail on myself to wish that Milton had been a rhymers; for I cannot wish his work to be other than it is; yet, like other heroes, he is to be admired rather than imitated. He that thinks himself capable of astonishing, may write blank verse; but those that hope only to please, must condescend to rhyme.

The highest praise of genius is original invention. Milton cannot be said to

have contrived the structure of an epick poem, and therefore must yield to that vigour and amplitude of mind to which all generations must be indebted for the art of poetical narration, for the texture of the fable, the variation of incidents, the interposition or dialogue, and all the stratagems that surprise and enchain attention. But, of all the borrowers from Homer, Milton is perhaps the least indebted. He was naturally a thinker for himself, confident of his own abilities, and disdainful of help or hindrance: he did not refuse admission to the thoughts or images of his predecessors, but he did not seek them. From his contemporaries he neither
courted

courted nor received support; there is in his writings nothing by which the pride of other authors might be gratified, or favour gained; no exchange of praise, nor solicitation of support. His great works were performed under discountenance, and in blindness, but difficulties vanished at his touch; he was born for whatever is arduous, and his work is not the greatest of heroick poems, only because it is not the first.



BUTLER.

OF the great author of Hudibras there is a life prefixed to the later edition of his poem, by an unknown writer, and therefore of disputable authority; and some account is incidentally given by Wood, who confesses the uncertainty of his own narrative; more however than they knew cannot now be learned, and nothing remains but to compare and copy them.

SAMUEL BUTLER was born in the parish of Strensham in Worcestershire,

according to his biographer, in 1612; but Mr. Longueville, the son of Butler's principal friend, informed the author of the "General Dictionary" that he was born in 1600.

His father's condition is variously represented. Wood mentions him as competently wealthy; but the other says he was an honest farmer with some small estate, who made a shift to educate his son at the grammar-school of Worcester, under Mr. Henry Bright, from whose care he removed for a short time to Cambridge; but, for want of money, was never made a member of any college. Wood leaves us rather doubtful whether he went to Cambridge or Oxford; but at last makes him pass
fix

fix or seven years at Cambridge, without knowing in what hall or college: yet it can hardly be imagined that he lived so long in either university, but as belonging to one house or another; and it is still less likely that he could have so long inhabited a place of learning with so little distinction as to leave his residence uncertain.

Wood has his information from his brother, whose narrative placed him at Cambridge, in opposition to that of his neighbours which sent him to Oxford. The brother's seems the best authority, till, by confessing his inability to tell his hall or college, he gives reason to suspect that he was resolved to bestow on him an academical education; but

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durst not name a college, for fear of detection.

He was for some time, according to the author of his life, clerk to Mr. Jefferys of Earl's-Croom in Worcestershire, an eminent justice of the peace. In his service he had not only leisure for study, but for recreation: his amusements were musick and painting; and the reward of his pencil was the friendship of the celebrated Cooper.

He was afterwards admitted into the family of the countess of Kent, where he had the use of a library; and so much recommended himself to Selden, that he was often employed by him in literary business. Selden, as is well known, was steward to the countess,

tefs, and is fupposed to have gained much of his wealth by managing her estate.

In what character Butler was admitted into that lady's fervice, how long he continued in it, and why he left it, is, like the other incidents of his life, utterly unknown.

The viciffitudes of his condition placed him afterwards in the family of Sir Samuel Luke, one of Cromwel's officers. Here he obferved fo much of the character of the feftaries, that he is faid to have written or begun his poem at this time; and it is likely that fuch a defign would be formed in a place where he faw the principles and practices of the rebels, audacious and

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undisguised in the confidence of success.

At length the king returned, and the time came in which loyalty hoped for its reward. Butler, however, was only made secretary to the earl of Carbury, president of the principality of Wales; who conferred on him the stewardship of Ludlow Castle, when the Court of the Marches was revived.

In this part of his life, he married Mrs. Herbert, a gentlewoman of a good family; and lived, says Wood, upon her fortune, having studied the common law, but never practised it. A fortune she had, says his biographer, but it was lost by bad securities.

In 1663 was published the first part, containing three cantos, of the poem of Hudibras, which, as Prior relates, was made known at court, by the taste and influence of the earl of Dorset. When it was known, it was necessarily admired: the king quoted, the courtiers studied, and the whole party of the royalists applauded it. Every eye watched for the golden shower which was to fall upon the author, who certainly was not without his part in the general expectation.

In 1664 the second part appeared; the curiosity of the nation was re-kindled, and the writer was again praised and elated. But praise was his whole reward. Clarendon, says

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Wood, gave him reason to hope for “places and employments of value and credit;” but no such advantages did he ever obtain. It is reported that the king once gave him three hundred guineas; but of this temporary bounty I find no proof.

Wood relates that he was secretary to Villiers duke of Buckingham, when he was Chancellor of Cambridge: this is doubted by the other writer, who yet allows the duke to have been his frequent benefactor. That both these accounts are false there is reason to suspect, from a story told by Packe, in his account of the life of Wycherley, and from some verses which Mr. Thyer has published in the author’s remains.

“ Mr.

“ Mr. Wycherley,” says Packe, “ had
 “ always laid hold of any opportunity
 “ which offered of representing to the
 “ duke of Buckingham how well Mr.
 “ Butler had deserved of the royal fa-
 “ mily, by writing his inimitable Hu-
 “ dibras ; and that it was a reproach to
 “ the court that a person of his loyalty
 “ and wit should suffer in obscurity,
 “ and under the wants he did. The
 “ duke always seemed to hearken to
 “ him with attention enough ; and, af-
 “ ter some time, undertook to recom-
 “ mend his pretensions to his majesty.
 “ Mr. Wycherley, in hopes to keep
 “ him steady to his word, obtained of
 “ his grace to name a day, when he
 “ might introduce that modest and un-
 “ fortunate

" fortunate poet to his new patron. At
 " last an appointment was made, and
 " the place of meeting was agreed to
 " be the Roebuck. Mr. Butler and
 " his friend attended accordingly: the
 " duke joined them; but, as the d--l
 " would have it, the door of the room
 " where they sat was open, and his
 " grace, who had seated himself near
 " it, observing a pimp of his acquaint-
 " tance (the creature too was a knight)
 " trip by with a brace of ladies, im-
 " mediately quitted his engagement, to
 " follow another kind of business, at
 " which he was more ready than in
 " doing good offices to men of desert;
 " though no one was better qualified
 " than he, both in regard to his for-
 " tune

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“ tune and understanding; to protect
“ them; and from that time to the day
“ of his death, poor Butler never found
“ the least effect of his promise !”

Such is the story. The verses are written with a degree of acrimony, such as neglect and disappointment might naturally excite; and such as it would be hard to imagine Butler capable of expressing against a man who had any claim to his gratitude.

Notwithstanding this discouragement and neglect, he still prosecuted his design; and in 1678 published the third part, which still leaves the poem imperfect and abrupt. How much more he originally intended, or with what

events

events the action was to be concluded, it is vain to conjecture. Nor can it be thought strange that he should stop here, however unexpectedly. To write without reward is sufficiently unpleasing; and, if his birth be placed right by Mr. Longueville, he had now arrived at an age when he might well think it proper to be in jest no longer.

He died in 1680; and Mr. Longueville, having unsuccessfully solicited a subscription for his interment in Westminster Abbey, buried him at his own cost in the church-yard of Covent Garden. Dr. Simon Patrick read the service.

About sixty years afterwards, Mr. Barber, a printer, mayor of London, and

and a friend to Mr. Butler's principles,
bestowed on him a monument in West-
minster Abbey, thus inscribed:

M. S.

SAMUELIS BUTLERI,

Qui *Strenshamiae* in agro *Vigorn.* nat. 1612,
obiit *Lond.* 1680.

Vir doctus imprimis, acer, integer;
Operibus Ingenii, non item præmiis, foelix;
Satyrici apud nos Carminis Artifex egregius;
Quo simulatæ Religionis Larvam detraxit,
Et Perduellium scelera liberrime exagitavit:
Scriptorum in suo genere, Primus et Postremus.

Ne, cui vivo deerant ferè omnia,

Deesset etiam mortuo Tumulus,

Hoc tandem posito marmore, curavit

JOHANNES BARBER, Civis *Londinensis*, 1721.

After

After his death were published three small volumes of his posthumous works: I know not by whom collected, or by what authority ascertained; and, lately, two volumes more have been printed by Mr. Thyer of Manchester, indubitably genuine. From none of these pieces can his life be traced, or his character discovered. Some verses, in the last collection, shew him to have been among those who ridiculed the institution of the Royal Society, of which the enemies were for some time very numerous and very acrimonious, for what reason it is hard to conceive, since the philosophers professed not to advance doctrines, but to produce facts; and the most zealous enemy of innovation

tion must admit the gradual progress of experience, however he may oppose hypothetical temerity.

- In this mist of obscurity passed the life of Butler, a man whose name can only perish with his language. The date of his birth is doubtful; the mode and place of his education are unknown; the events of his life are variously related; and all that can be told with certainty is, that he was poor.

THE poem of Hudibras is one of those compositions of which a nation may justly boast; as the images which it exhibits are domestick, the sentiments

ments unborrowed and unexpected, and the strain of diction original and peculiar. We must not, however, suffer the pride which we assume as the countrymen of Butler to make any encroachment upon justice, nor appropriate those honours which others have a right to share. The poem of Hudibras is not wholly English; the original idea is to be found in the history of Don Quixote; a book to which a mind of the greatest powers may be indebted without disgrace.

Cervantes shews a man, who, having, by the incessant perusal of incredible tales, subjected his understanding to his imagination, and familiarised his mind by pertinacious meditation to think
on

of incredible events and scenes of impossible existence, goes out in the pride of knighthood, to redress wrongs, and defend virgins, to rescue captive princesses, and tumble usurpers from their thrones; attended by a squire, whose cunning, too low for the suspicion of a generous mind, enables him often to cheat his master.

The hero of Butler is a Presbyterian Justice, who, in the confidence of legal authority, and the rage of zealous ignorance, ranges the country to repress superstition and correct abuses, accompanied by an Independant clerk, disputatious and obstinate, with whom he often debates, but never conquers him.

Cervantes had so much kindness for Don Quixote, that, however he em-

barrasses him with absurd distresses, he gives him so much sense and virtue as may preserve our esteem: wherever he is, or whatever he does, he is made by matchless dexterity commonly ridiculous, but never contemptible.

But for poor Hudibras, his poet had no tenderness: he chuses not that any pity should be shewn or respect paid him: he gives him up at once to laughter and contempt, without any quality that can dignify or protect him.

In forming the character of Hudibras, and describing his person and habiliments, the author seems to labour with a tumultuous confusion of dissimilar ideas. He had read the history of the mock knights-errant; he knew the notions
and

and manners of a presbyterian magistrate, and tried to unite the absurdities of both, however distant, in one personage. Thus he gives him that pedantick ostentation of knowledge which has no relation to chivalry, and loads him with martial encumbrances that can add nothing to his civil dignity. He sends him out *a colonelling*, and yet never brings him within sight of war.

If Hudibras be considered as the representative of the Presbyterians, it is not easy to say why his weapons should be represented as ridiculous or useless; for, whatever judgement might be passed upon their knowledge or their arguments, experience had sufficiently shown

believe every reader regrets the paucity of events, and complains that in the poem of Hudibras, as in the history of Thucydides, there is more said than done. The scenes are too seldom changed, and the attention is tired with long conversation.

It is indeed much more easy to form dialogues than to contrive adventures. Every position makes way for an argument, and every objection dictates an answer. When two disputants are engaged upon a complicated and extensive question, the difficulty is not to continue but to end the controversy. But whether it be that we comprehend but few of the possibilities of life, or that life itself affords little variety, every
man

man who has tried knows how much labour it will cost to form such a combination of circumstances, as shall have at once the grace of novelty and credibility, and delight fancy without violence to reason.

Perhaps the dialogue of this poem is not perfect. Some power of engaging the attention might have been added to it, by quicker reciprocation, by seasonable interruptions, by sudden questions, and by a nearer approach to dramatic spriteliness; without which, fictitious speeches will always tire, however sparkling with sentences, and however variegated with allusions.

The great source of pleasure is variety. Uniformity must tire at last,

though it be uniformity of excellence. We love to expect; and, when expectation is disappointed or gratified, we want to be again expecting. For this impatience of the present, whoever would please, must make provision. The skilful writer *irritat, mulcet*, makes a due distribution of the still and animated parts. It is for want of this artful intertexture, and those necessary changes, that the whole of a book may be tedious, though all the parts are praised.

If unexhaustible wit could give perpetual pleasure, no eye would ever leave half-read the work of Butler; for what poet has ever brought so many remote images so happily together? It is scarcely

ly

ly possible to peruse a page without finding some association of images that was never found before. By the first paragraph the reader is amused, by the next he is delighted, and by a few more strained to astonishment; but astonishment is a toilsome pleasure: he is soon weary of wondering, and longs to be diverted.

Omnia vult belle Matho dicere, dic
aliquando

Et bene, dic neutrum, dic aliquando
male.

Imagination is useless without knowledge: nature gives in vain the power of combination, unless study and observation supply materials to be combined.

Butler's

Butler's treasures of knowledge appear proportioned to his expence : whatever topick employs his mind, he shews himself qualified to expand and illustrate it with all the accessories that books can furnish : he is found not only to have travelled the beaten road, but the bye-paths of literature ; not only to have taken general surveys, but to have examined particulars with minute inspection.

If the French boast the learning of Rabelais, we need not be afraid of confronting them with Butler.

But the most valuable parts of his performance are those which retired study and native wit cannot supply. He that merely makes a book from books may
be

be useful, but can scarcely be great. Butler had not suffered life to glide beside him unseen or unobserved. He had watched with great diligence the operations of human nature, and traced the effects of opinion, humour, interest, and passion. From such remarks proceeded that great number of sententious distichs which have passed into conversation, and are added as proverbial axioms to the general stock of practical knowledge.

When any work has been viewed and admired, the first question of intelligent curiosity is, how was it performed? Hudibras was not a hasty effusion; it was not produced by a sudden tumult of imagination, or a short paroxysm of violent

violent labour. To accumulate such a mass of sentiments at the call of accidental desire, or of sudden necessity, is beyond the reach and power of the most active and comprehensive mind. I am informed by Mr. Thyer of Manchester, the excellent editor of this author's reliques, that he could shew something like Hudibras in prose. He has in his possession the common-place book, in which Butler repositèd, not such events or precepts as are gathered by reading; but such remarks, similitudes, allusions, assemblages, or inferences, as occasion prompted, or meditation produced; those thoughts that were generated in his own mind, and might be usefully applied to some future purpose. Such

is the labour of those who write for immortality.

But human works are not easily found without a perishable part. Of the ancient poets every reader feels the mythology tedious and oppressive. Of Hudibras the manners, being founded on opinions, are temporary and local, and therefore become every day less intelligible and less striking. What Cicero says of philosophy is true likewise of wit and humour, that "time effaces
 " the fictions of opinion, and confirms
 " the determinations of Nature." Such manners as depend upon standing relations and general passions are co-extended with the race of man; but those modifications of life, and peculiarities
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of practice, which are the progeny of error and perverseness, or at best of some accidental influence or transient persuasion, must perish with their parents.

Much therefore of that humour which transported the last century with merriment is lost to us, who do not know the sour solemnity, the sullen superstition, the gloomy moroseness, and the stubborn scruples of the ancient Puritans; or, if we knew them, derive our information only from books, or from tradition, have never had them before our eyes, and cannot but by recollection and study understand the lines in which they are satirised. Our grandfathers knew the picture from the life;

we judge of the life by contemplating the picture.

It is scarcely possible, in the regularity and composure of the present time, to image the tumult of absurdity, and clamour of contradiction, that perplexed doctrine, and disturbed both publick and private quiet, in that age, when subordination was broken, and awe was hissed away; when any unsettled innovator who could hatch a half-formed notion produced it to the publick; when every man might become a preacher, and almost every preacher could collect a congregation.

The wisdom of the nation is very reasonably supposed to reside in the parliament. What can be concluded.

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of the lower classes of the people, when in one of the parliaments summoned by Cromwell it was seriously proposed, that all the records in the Tower should be burnt, that all memory of things past should be effaced, and that the whole system of life should commence anew?

We have never been witnesses of animosities excited by the use of minced pies and plumb porridge; nor seen with what abhorrence those who could eat them at all other times of the year would shrink from them in December. An old Puritan, who was alive in my childhood, being at one of the feasts of the church invited by a neighbour to partake his cheer, told him, that, if he would treat him at an alehouse with
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beer, brewed for all times and seasons, he should accept his kindness, but would have none of his superstitious meats or drinks.

One of the puritanical tenets was the illegality of all games of chance; and he that reads Gataker upon *Lots*, may see how much learning and reason one of the first scholars of his age thought necessary, to prove that it was no crime to throw a die, or play at cards, or to hide a shilling for the reckoning.

Astrology however, against which so much of this satire is directed, was not more the folly of the Puritans than of others. It had in that time a very extensive dominion. Its predictions raised hopes and fears in minds which ought

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to have rejected it with contempt. In hazardous undertakings, care was taken to begin under the influence of a propitious planet; and when the king was prisoner in Carisbrook Castle, an astrologer was consulted what hour would be found most favourable to an escape.

What effect this poem had upon the publick, whether it shamed imposture or reclaimed credulity, is not easily determined. Cheats can seldom stand long against laughter. It is certain that the credit of planetary intelligence wore fast away; though some men of knowledge, and Dryden among them, continued to believe that conjunctions and oppositions had a great part in the distribution

tribution of good or evil, and in the government of sublunary things.

Poetical Action ought to be probable upon certain suppositions, and such probability as burlesque requires is here violated only by one incident. Nothing can shew more plainly the necessity of doing something, and the difficulty of finding something to do, than that Butler was reduced to transfer to his hero the flagellation of Sancho, not the most agreeable fiction of Cervantes; very suitable indeed to the manners of that age and nation, which ascribed wonderful efficacy to voluntary penances; but so remote from the practice and opinions of the Hudibrastick time, that judgement and imagination are alike offended.

The Diction of this poem is grossly familiar, and the numbers purposely neglected, except in a few places where the thoughts by their native excellence secure themselves from violation, being such as mean language cannot express. The mode of versification has been blamed by Dryden, who regrets that the heroic measure was not rather chosen. To the critical sentence of Dryden the highest reverence would be due, were not his decisions often precipitate, and his opinions immature. When he wished to change the measure, he probably would have been willing to change more. If he intended that, when the numbers were heroick, the diction should still remain vulgar,

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he planned a very heterogeneous and unnatural composition. If he preferred a general stateliness both of sound and words, he can be only understood to wish that Butler had undertaken a different work.

The measure is quick, spritely, and colloquial, suitable to the vulgarity of the words and the levity of the sentiments. But such numbers and such diction can gain regard only when they are used by a writer whose vigour of fancy and copiousness of knowledge entitle him to contempt of ornaments, and who, in confidence of the novelty and justness of his conceptions, can afford to throw metaphors and epithets away. To another that conveys common

thoughts

thoughts in careless versification, it will only be said, "*Pauper videri Cinna vult, & est pauper.*" The meaning and diction will be worthy of each other, and criticism may justly doom them to perish together.

Nor, even though another Butler should arise, would another Hudibras obtain the same regard. Burlesque consists in a disproportion between the stile and the sentiments, or between the adventitious sentiments and the fundamental subject. It therefore, like all bodies compounded of heterogeneous parts, contains in it a principle of corruption. All disproportion is unnatural, and from what is unnatural we can derive only the pleasure which novelty produces.

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We admire it awhile as a strange thing ; but, when it is no longer strange, we perceive its deformity. It is a kind of artifice, which by frequent repetition detects itself ; and the reader, learning in time what he is to expect, lays down his book, as the spectator turns away from a second exhibition of those tricks, of which the only use is to shew that they can be played.







